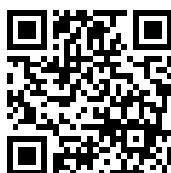

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**DEATH-BED SCENES AND PASTORAL
CONVERSATIONS.**

SECOND SERIES.

DEATH-BED SCENES

AND

PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.

SECOND SERIES.

BY THE LATE

JOHN WARTON, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS SONS.

"Every Scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."—MATTHEW xiii. 52.

"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."—2 TIMOTHY iii. 17.

LONDON:

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PREFACE BY THE EDITORS.

Six years and more having now elapsed since the first appearance of "Death-bed Scenes," and the work having been greatly encouraged, not only at home, but even in foreign countries; it may reasonably, perhaps, be inferred, that a second series will be received with equal favour. The new pieces are precisely of the same character with the old ones;—they are in the same dramatic form; and the subjects are of similar importance and interest. Nor was the rule of selection any imagined superior merit in the pieces themselves first published, but the circumstances of the chief actors in the several dramas being such as made it impossible to apply the facts to their injury, or discomfort, even in the place where they were once known. The same rule is strictly adhered to now; death has swept many of the actors off the stage; and time has obliterated the remembrance of the facts. Opinions and actions are here recorded which are no longer of any consequence but to ourselves, for examples to imitate, or to shun.

If the reader should require any other information upon the work, we refer him to the ample prefaces, by the author and ourselves, which are prefixed to the former volumes.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

The Souths.—AGED CONVERTS.

	Page
§ 1. The Souths	1
§ 2. The Same and Others	27

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Bolton.—HAPPY OLD AGE.

§ 1. Mrs. Bolton	51
§ 2. The Same and the Children	79

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Greathead.—HOPES AND FEARS.

§ 1. Mr. and Mrs. Greathead, Mr. Benson, &c.	118
§ 2. Mr. and Mrs. Greathead	140

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Brown.—CONTENTMENT.

§ 1. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Wilkinson	156
§ 2. The Same	187

CHAPTER V.

The Catechumens.—CONFIRMATION.

	Page
§ 1. Schools	215
§ 2. Elderly Persons	241
§ 3. Miscellaneous	276
§ 4. Mr., Mrs. and Miss Wynne	318

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. King.—SECTARIANISM.

§ 1. Mr. King	374
§ 2. Mr. King and Others	406
§ 3. Mr. King	434
§ 4. The Same	452
§ 5. Mr. King and Mr. Barwell	466
§ 6. Mr. and Miss King	499

DEATH-BED SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOUTHS—AGED CONVERTS.

§ 1. THE SOUTHS.

IF my readers should have chanced to meet with the chapter upon 'Warnings' before they see this, they will already be well acquainted with the old people, who are mentioned in the title, and may then, perhaps, be desirous also to know, what became of them after the termination of that dialogue. Their curiosity, if they have any such, will now be gratified; and two others of their former acquaintance, distinguished only by their vices, will be introduced again to their notice. Meanwhile, they will probably be glad to hear, before they begin my present story, that Jacob Brockbourn, the main personage of that drama, has risen by good conduct to be his master's foreman, and is upon the point of entering into a

second marriage. The account also which I have to give of the young woman, his step-daughter, is very favourable. It is impossible, I am sure, to have read her former history without being much pleased with her ; and I am happy to communicate, that she has obtained a higher service by the recommendation of Mrs. Browne, her then mistress, in which she behaves herself with similar diligence and integrity. But what I am about to add is painful and terrible, and will cast a sad damp, I fear, over the agreeable intelligence. The young Mrs. Hodges is dead ; dead without having returned to the public exercise of her religion. Poor creature ! she was desirous to do it, and had repeatedly settled with Mrs. Martin to accompany her to church ; but the ridicule of her wicked friends as repeatedly laughed her out of her wise and pious intention. God, however, did not brook her delays and fickle resolution. In the midst of them she was seized with a brain-fever, and within three days she was a corpse. Her disease was fatal, and she never knew its danger—she did but rave and die. May the Father of mercies have been merciful to her soul (all things are possible with *him*), for that short gleam of penitence and amendment ! We know not what she had to conquer, and cannot judge of her heart. Her husband married again shortly afterwards.

Behold me now, then, on the way to visit old

South, and very near to his cottage. There I met his wife, the picture of wretchedness itself. "Ha!" I exclaimed, "your husband is reported to be dying; have you left him without anybody to nurse him?" "I am very bad myself, Sir," she replied, in a most melancholy tone; "very bad indeed; and I am just crawling about for a little air." "What is the matter with you?" I asked. "Ah! Sir," she answered; "it is *here*," and she put her hand upon her stomach. "I am always gnawing, gnawing *here*." "Yes," I said, severe, but without any severity of manner, "your poor stomach is worn out; you have used it too much, and in a way that God could not approve. Do you begin to consider now, that your life is drawing to an end; that you have hastened your own end by drinking; and that you will soon have a reckoning to make to the great God whom you have offended?" "I hope, Sir, he will be merciful to me," she replied, with a countenance of alarm and terror. "I hope so too," I said devoutly; "but why? what reason have you for such a hope?" "Ah! I know of none, Sir," she answered, trembling; "I am a sinner, a very great sinner, I am sure;" and then she lifted up her hands to *me*, as if *I* could save her, and believing, no doubt, that *I* could.

This touched me; she was actually (so I hoped) on the road to heaven. Not long ago, like

Peter, she would have denied, with horrid imprecations upon her own head, that she was addicted to any sinful practice ; now she confessed it without reserve, and with many signs of sorrow. God had turned and looked upon her, as Christ did on Peter ; and she was become at once a penitent. This reflection touched me still more ; but I said, though rather faltering, “ Well, if you are a broken-hearted sinner, you *may* hope ; there is good reason for hoping ; Jesus Christ came into this world, and died to save such as you are. Truly you have lived in the lowest state of poverty and wretchedness, literally about the highways and the hedges ; but he will receive you nevertheless, if you go to him with so humble and contrite a spirit as you seem now to have. Nay, he invites you himself to come to him, and promises you a gracious reception. Perhaps he will be the more kind and compassionate to you, because you come from the highways and the hedges, and not from a palace. But get on before me as fast as you can hobble, and tell your husband that I am at the door. Is he better, or worse ? ” “ He was asleep, when I came out, Sir,” she answered mournfully ; and then, shaking her head, she added, more mournfully still, “ He will never get up from his bed again, Sir. His time is run out ; and what will become of *me*, a poor old *lone* woman ? ”

Thus she went on lamenting, and in a few

minutes I was at the sick man's side. To my eye there was no symptom of death upon his visage ; but a slight shock might overturn one so old. His grey beard was the most striking feature about him, and gave him a venerable cast of countenance. He had missed his weekly shaving by the penny-barber probably for two or three weeks, and might easily in consequence have passed for no bad representation of one of the aged patriarchs, if he had not been lying in this miserable hovel, with nothing but rags and patch-work for quilts and coverlets. "How are you, old friend?" I asked, soothingly. "Better, Sir," he answered, "better I think ;" but as one more willing to think so than convinced of the fact. So I asked again, "What does the doctor say of you?" "Why, Sir," he replied sorrowfully, "he says he can do nothing for such an old creature as I am." "If we escape all accidents," I said, "and every other disease, old age is a disease which is sure to destroy us at last. You are half-way between eighty and ninety years ; you have lived longer than the usual period of men ; you *must* die soon at any rate. No medicine can bring back the strength of the young. I was very sorry once to hear you say that you might live to the extraordinary age of your mother, which was beyond a hundred years ; for you seemed to say it, as a just excuse for delaying to prepare yourself to stand before your last Judge,

who will judge you for ever. God, no doubt, was as little pleased as I was, with so vain and unwise a thought ; and now he shows you how brittle your life is, and how easily, with one little blow, he can dash it to pieces. But see how very gracious he is, and how inclined to mercy ; so that rather than strike you dead at once, he reminds you by this sickness, in a gentle manner, that your life and breath are in his power ; and he spares you your understanding and your memory, that you may be able to look back upon your numerous offences against him, and pray to him with uplifted hands and eyes, and still better with sincerity of heart, for pardon and grace. Ah ! where would have been your poor soul, and the poor soul of your aged partner here, if God in his anger had cut you both down, in an instant, in the midst of your vicious indulgences, and when you were blaspheming his holy name ? where would your poor souls have gone ? I shiver with horror when I think, that you might have been hereafter burning together in the dreadful lake of fire and brimstone which will never be quenched ; seeing the agonies and torments of each other ; hearing each other wail and gnash the teeth ; unable to reach out a helping hand to one another ; unable to speak to one another a single word of comfort ; knowing that the intolerable woe of both must be without end and without pause. Oh ! love him then with

all your heart and soul, and thank him with all the words you can find, merciful as he is, that you are yet in the land of the living, and that you have power to love him, and to thank him for a while at least, before you go hence to your eternal lot. It may yet be a happy one. He beholds your tears ; and if they are tears of remorse, and come from your hearts, he will wipe them away in heaven. If ever you weep there, it shall be only tears of joy, because you are got there."

During this the old woman was standing at the bottom of the bed, and supporting herself against it ; the tears flowed down her cheeks in copious streams, as if the sluices had never been opened before ; ever and anon she raised her hands and clasped them together, and invoked the divine mercy : " God be merciful to me !" she said ; " God have pity upon my soul ! I hope he will ; surely he will ; surely he will forgive me for Jesus Christ's sake !" Such was the constant tenor of her fervent ejaculations. The old man was firmer, or more callous ; or, perhaps, though thinking himself about to die shortly, yet, not having been so wicked as his wife, he did not consider it necessary to be afflicted with an equal sorrow. A few big drops were all that rolled from either eye ; his face bespoke but little compunction, or alarm. I resumed upon the last supposition, and proceeded thus.

“ Ah ! my poor old man !” I said, addressing myself to *him* alone, “ how long a life have you lived without a God and without a Saviour ! I mean without serving them ; without praying to them, or praising them ; without knowing your need of them ; without thinking of them at all !” “ I have been to church, Sir, very often of late,” said the old man, interrupting me. “ It is true,” I replied ; “ for many months you came regularly to church, once a week, on Wednesdays or Fridays.” “ I could not come on Sundays, Sir,” he said again, “ with my week-day clothes, tattered and patched as they were, and with the dirt of many a long year upon them. Where should I have found an empty bench to sit down upon, Sir ? Who would have sat next to me ? All would shun ragged old South like a plague. Who is without a coat to his back, or a shoe to his feet, but poor old South ? Even there I should have been a laughing-stock, Sir ; and how could I stand so long with these worn out limbs ?”

“ Yes,” I replied, “ my poor old friend ! but how came this miserable poverty and wretchedness ? What has deprived you of a good coat to your back, and whole shoes to your feet ? Remember what wages you got, and the gains of your wife besides, and none to support but yourselves. Ah ! there must have been some sad drain, which carried off everything, and left you

thus, both of you, tattered and patched indeed ; aye, and often without a morsel of bread to eat. Make no excuse for your wretchedness therefore ; you do but deceive yourself ; your wretchedness is itself one of your sins ; it was wilful, and you now understand into how great a sin it has led you besides ; not to worship your God in his own holy house on his own holy day."

They were now both of them speechless ; and without doubt their consciences bore terrible witness against them. The old woman frequently lifted up her hands, and, by several other indubitable tokens, declared her conviction and her remorse. I could scarcely believe it, I confess, so great was the change ; but never was there so irresistible an evidence of such a change, and that the change itself was real and sincere. The old man had not the means of showing the same feeling, if it actually possessed him. His hands were within the bed-clothes, and nothing but his face was visible ; his face, however, was wetted with new tears.

I began again. " It is a sad thing to deceive one's self at any time ; but on a death-bed it is very, very sad, because we may die without being undeceived, until we open our eyes in the other world, and then discover, when it is too late, that we have deceived ourselves to our own destruction. You were, a moment ago, in this great

danger, my poor old man! You are, I fear, in the same danger now. You came to church on week-days, it is true; but why? Search your own heart, and let conscience do her proper work. If you came to serve God, without any other less worthy motive, it is well, and he accepted your service I have no doubt; but you know best yourself (better than *me*, but not better than God), what were your real motives. If it was to obtain my favour, or my money alone, what had God to do with it? and what right have you to expect that he should reckon it to you as a proof or sign that you began to love or fear him?"

The old man, apparently, would have defended himself, if it had been possible, and he began to mutter something, as it seemed, with that view; but it was so indistinctly uttered, that it was not intelligible to me. However, to put an end to all equivocation, I said decisively, " You ceased to come, when I ceased to give; can there be a clearer mark, that it was not religion, but the desire of getting my money which brought you to church?" " But I came again, Sir," he replied, rather confidently, " without your promising me money." " And without expecting any?" I asked. " I hoped you would give me some," he answered, " and so you did: but I did not know that you would." " Well," I said, " to tell you the truth, I sometimes bribe people to come to church,

because I think it may do them good to come there at any rate. They will be sure to hear a great deal of good, and something may touch them to the quick; or God may touch them, and cause them to lay what they hear to heart. With this hope I have bribed *you*, my old friend; and happy shall I be, if, by coming to church for money only, you have got some knowledge of God and your Saviour, without which you might otherwise have died little better than a heathen, and lost for ever. Did not you learn at church what to call God when you pray to him, and how to pray to him; always in the name of his blessed Son, his only Son, Jesus Christ?" "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I learnt *that*, and a great deal more. And when I left off coming to church, I did not leave off praying. Many a good time, Sir, before the sun peeped over the earth, and after he was gone down, early and late, at my work, the fields all dusk, I have stuck my spade deep into the ground, and knelt on my knees by the side of it, and clasped both my hands together, and looked upwards, and prayed for mercy."

Thus he drew, unconsciously, a striking picture of himself, which with "my mind's eye" I often see; the humble attitude on the cold earth, the withered hands, the hoary head, the wrinkled face, all directed towards heaven, the implement of his labour fixed upright near him, and the last shades

of night still hovering around, or fresh advancing apace. But the moral picture pleased me most: a grey old sinner, awakened from his long slumber of thoughtless security, and suing thus, early and late, at the throne of grace, for pardon and mercy, when no mortal eye could see him; when the eye of omniscience only was upon him. If this be true, I thought within myself, it is genuine unfeigned repentance and faith; nor have I any reason whatever to doubt the truth of it; he told his own story with the honest air of simplicity and sincerity.

For a minute I was buried in reflection; and when I had satisfied myself that my constant admonitions, so long appearing to be quite fruitless, had not been ultimately thrown away, it gave me great encouragement to pursue the same methods with others, and not to retire from the field in despair, even under the most unpromising circumstances. At length I said, with a tone of pleasure and commendation, "I am truly glad, my poor old friend, to find that you are trying to redeem lost time, and to make an acquaintance with God, who is the great lover of souls, and the bountiful giver of all good. Now, on your bed of sickness, you may do much more than before; indeed, you have nothing else to do now, but to think of him, and to pray to him. He deserves this of you. Of every blessing that you ever had,

he was the cause ; he gave you your health and strength to labour, and your daily bread to eat, although you were not aware of it yourself, and so passed him by without notice. He was always working on every side of you, although you could not see him with your eye. Who placed the sun where he is, and keeps him there, to give light and warmth to men ? It is God : no power less than his could do it. Who appointed the useful and delightful change of night, to refresh us, and repair our strength after our daily toils, with sweet sleep and rest ; and gave us the moon to cheer the darkness for those who are still awake and up, and to measure time for all ? It is God again. Who but God has the power and skill to order such wonderful things ? that sun and moon, day and night, without one single failure, have succeeded each other for thousands of years, for the benefit of men. What workman upon earth ever made the meanest tool that did not require continual repairs, and was not at last quite worn out ? That spade of yours, which stands in the corner there, how new it is in comparison with yourself, and yet how battered and worn ! But consider your own body : what mortal workman pretends to be able to make a foot, a hand, to walk, to grasp ; and still less a head, with so many senses, to see, and hear, and smell, and taste ? It is God alone who can work in this manner. But it has pleased him to make

the body liable to decay like your own spade, and all the works of mortal man. He makes things to last for ever, or only for a time, as suits his providence. So in this withering body there dwells a soul,—a spirit, more like the divine workman himself,—which can never decay; which cannot be confined in the same grave with the body; which must live for ever in joy or pain. This it is for which God cares so much. God may well care for everything which he has made, but most of all for that which is likest to himself. You cannot conceive, therefore, how he loves the soul, and how he wishes to save it from everlasting pain, and to make it fit for everlasting joy. But what a price did it cost him to make it possible for him to save a wicked soul! Even the death of his own son, Jesus Christ, upon the cross. To save wicked souls, God sent him down into this world, and laid upon *him* the punishment which wicked souls deserved. Does it not astonish you to think of such an instance of love? This is the greatest of all the blessings that God ever gave you, although you knew it not, or prized it least, because you knew but little of it. But now you know it better; now you are better acquainted with what God has done for you, and with what your blessed Saviour has suffered for you; and I hope you will have no thought for anything else. Your body is withered, and worn out with age; it

is not worth the thinking about any longer. Your soul—your soul,—*that* can never die, and, therefore, must have all your remaining cares ; how to cleanse it from sin, before God calls it away ; how to fit it for everlasting joy, that it may go to heaven, and not to the direful place, which I fear to mention by its name. O, pray to God, then, pray to him, both of you, that he may be pleased, for his dear Son's sake, to send his Holy Spirit to fill your souls with grief and sorrow for your sins ; and to put into your hearts good thoughts, good desires, good resolutions, and every thing else which is good. I, too, will pray for you, both here and in the church, to help, if I can, your own prayers. But he will graciously accept the best that you can do for yourselves, if, indeed, you do your best ; that is, if you pray to him from the very bottom of your hearts. Fine words are nothing to *him* ; he does not expect them of you, or care for them at all ; the meaning is everything in his sight ; and, be sure, he always sees your hearts, and knows what you mean."

By this time I was upon my knees, but only on the side of the bed, leaning rather than kneeling, that I might reach the further, and be the better heard by my poor patient, who was somewhat deaf. My hat was under my left arm, and my umbrella I held in my left hand, resting it upon the floor (for there was no place, even decently clean,

where I could safely deposit them); my right hand I kept at liberty, extending it sometimes over the old man, sometimes towards the old woman, and moving it perpetually in such a manner as to give the greater effect to my words. I called for no prayer-book, for I knew they had none; nor did I now carry one of my own, my eyes being too much impaired to read small print. Generally, indeed, at this period of my life, I was obliged to pray for the sick extemporaneously, on account of the weakness of my sight; and my custom was to interweave with the prayer the history of the sick themselves,—what it had been, and what it should be. To recount their own history, was the proper business of conversation with them, and I did it, probably, in that manner, with sufficient solemnity; but the solemnity was vastly increased by this peculiar method, of which the reader will now have a specimen, although not so striking as in many other cases. The old man drew his hands out of the bed of his own will, and joined them together; the old woman knelt on the floor, not following my example of kneeling against the bed. Whenever this was the case, I immediately knelt on the floor, be it in what state it might; and my change of position operated as a reproof upon the rest, who soon did the same. I was careful not to encourage real negligence in others, by real or apparent negligence of my own.

On the present occasion I augured well of the old woman's sincerity, when I saw her kneel on the floor at once.

“ O Lord God Almighty,” I thus began, “ who doth not fear *thee*, who that knows the greatness of thy power, and thinks of it seriously in his own mind ? How little can men do in comparison of thee ! Men can only kill the body, and there their power stops ; but thou, when thou hast killed, canst destroy both body and soul in hell ; that is, thou canst torment both body and soul in everlasting fire. Thou, therefore, art greatly to be feared above all the beings of whom we have ever heard. But thou art as merciful (O happy thing for sinners !) as thou art powerful. Look down from heaven, therefore, with pity and compassion, I beseech thee, upon these two aged people, who are sinners indeed, and but for thy mercy must perish soon and for ever by thy power. If they have lived so long a life without fearing thee ; if they may seem to have defied thy power, by breaking daily so many of thy holy laws ; if they have never sought after the knowledge of thee, but have lived without thee in this world, lying down and rising up, like the brute beast, without regarding their great Maker and Preserver ; yet cast them not off, I earnestly entreat thee, when they are now upon the very brink of the grave, and about to come to stand before thee for judg-

ment in the next world ; if it be late that they have come to the knowledge and the fear of thee, yet let it not be in vain. Pity them, O merciful Lord, even at this last hour, when they turn to thee weeping and praying ; let not thy wrath go forth to consume them, now that they are sorry for their offences against thee ; O pity their grey hairs, and spare them ! For Jesus Christ's sake thou canst yet do it ! For *his* sake thou canst always shew thy power in doings of mercy only !

“ And thou, blessed Jesu, who sufferedst so much to enable thy Father to show mercy, fastened to the cross, and pierced through thy hands and feet with cruel nails, do thou, where thou now sittest at God's right hand in heaven, accept these tokens of their sorrow, and thyself present to him their tears and prayers, and plead for them, that these are they whom thou camest to seek and to save, and for whom thou didst shed thy precious blood ! They are hoary with years, and yet they knew thee not, or neglected thee ; at the hearing of thy sacred name they bowed not their knees, to reverence and adore thee ; that holy name, whereby sinners may be saved, they used no otherwise than to curse and not to bless. But, O merciful Lord ! thou who didst pray for thy own murderer, even when they were forcing the nails through thy hands and feet ; thou who didst graciously excuse for them, that they did not know

what they did ; do thou excuse also with equal mercy for this sick old man, who lies on the bed of death, and for his aged partner, who now bows her knees before thee ; do thou excuse for them that they, too, were ignorant, and did not know what they did, when they used thy name only to curse and blaspheme.

“ But, if it might please our heavenly Father of his great goodness to pardon them for *thy* sake, and because thou hast paid the ransom for their sins, yet how shall they appear before him, and dwell with *him*, and *thee*, and the blessed angels and saints, without the white robe of purity and holiness ? Ah ! nothing can stand in the sight of the pure and holy God ; nothing is fit for such holy company but what is washed and clean from all taint and every spot of wickedness ; nothing in which there are not planted all the seeds of virtue, piety, and godliness. Still, therefore, may the wonderful mercies of *thee* and thy Father be in vain, unless thou send thy Holy Spirit to purify and sanctify them ; to cleanse their hearts from all the stains and defilements of sin ; and to make their bodies and souls a fit dwelling for himself and every Christian grace. Without *thee* and *him* they can do nothing of this kind for themselves, and they have everything to do in a short space. Their whole mind and understanding, their whole heart and feeling, must be entirely changed now at

the last ; they must become new creatures ; they must have new thoughts, new desires, new wills, when they are just upon the point of ceasing to live ; they must see that all their past life has been an offence against God, and they must hate themselves for it ; they must bewail it with sighs and groans that come from the heart, and humble themselves to the very dust of the earth ; they must hunger and thirst after righteousness, holiness, and godliness, which they never loved, but always set at nought before. This is what they have to do, alas ! in the short remnant of their day ; but how shall they be able to do it, unless thou strengthen them in their souls with some of thine own strength ; and unless thy blessed Spirit be graciously pleased to take up his abode with them, and to use all his holy influence upon their hearts ?

“ Come then, thou blessed Spirit of God and Christ, come, I beseech thee, and work thy holy and powerful work in these aged and repentant sinners ! Forsake them not in these the poor beginnings of a new life, when there is so much more to be done which can only be done by *thee* ! O fly not from them, when thou seest in what a dwelling thou must dwell, if thou descend to dwell with *them* in these bodies of theirs ! Thou wilt find them polluted and filthy with drunkenness, and lies, and curses, and other manifold sins

most abominable to *thee*, and most contrary to thy own holy nature ; not swept, not cleansed, not decked with one beautiful virtue, not prepared in any way for so holy a guest. Do thou prepare them then thyself ; for thou art able to do it by thy grace ; thou canst form them afresh, if it seem fit unto thee, after thine own will ; thou art already doing it, I humbly trust ; this first sorrow of theirs comes from *thee*, and is in earnest. I humbly trust that thou wilt supply all their wants, and help all their infirmities ; that their repentance and their prayers, and their faith in Christ, and their desires and endeavours after holiness, all springing from thee and assisted by thee, may be such as they ought to be, and may go up from this earth below to God in heaven above for a well-pleasing sacrifice and a favourable memorial of them.

“ And now, O God, I commit them to thy gracious mercy and protection ; do thou keep them safe under the shadow of thy wings, that no more temptations to evil, nor any wicked spirit may ever come near them to trouble them again ; do thou lift up the light of thy face upon them, and shine in their hearts, that even in darkness and death itself they may feel thy support and comfort, and may be cheered with an assurance of hope that they die in peace with *thee*.”

Thus did I pray, and by the very form of the

supplication try to open their understandings and hearts, that they might conceive and feel aright with respect to their spiritual condition ; their need of a Saviour, and of a sanctifying grace, to reconcile them to God, and to qualify them for heaven. The old woman was deeply impressed with what I said, and continued to weep bitterly ; when I looked towards her in various parts of the prayer, she raised her hands, and ejaculated fervently some word or other, which implied an acknowledgment of her guilt and danger ; and all the time you might have seen terror and humility in every feature of her face. The old man, as before, was still apparently composed, and betrayed what emotions he felt only by a few tears ; but when I had finished, and remained fixed in silent reflection, he seemed to be preparing himself to speak ; so I listened with every faculty that I possessed, being full of anxious curiosity to hear what he would say in so momentous a situation, and after the most awful ideas had been presented to his mind. He spoke, as I expected ; but, alas ! it was not to my edification, except to show me what meagre notions he had of the future world, and how little capable he was of comprehending the separate existence of a disembodied soul.

“ I have been dreaming a dream, Sir,” he said. “ When,” I asked. “ Just before you came in, Sir,” he answered ; “ I fell asleep for a quarter of

an hour, or so." " Well," I said; " what did you dreamt about?" " I dreamt that I was dead, Sir," he replied. " Had you been thinking much about your own death before?" I asked. " No," he said, " nothing particular." " When then?" I enquired; " did you seem to know where you were when you were dead?" " Oh! yes, Sir," he answered; " I thought I was in a warm place." " Indeed?" I said, foreboding something terrible; " did you really think so?" " Yes, Sir," he replied; " the place was very warm—very warm—but comfortable like." " Oh! it was, was it?" I said; " and what then?" " Why, Sir," he answered, " I was very warm, but I could not turn myself much about like; it was a narrow place where I was. I was comfortable, only I was too tight to move round, and change sides like." " Oh!" I said " to be sure, you dreamt that you were in your coffin, and nailed up to be buried; did not you think that the narrow place was a coffin?" " No, I did not, Sir, indeed," he replied; " I never thought about a coffin at all; but it must have been a coffin, I suppose. I was warm and comfortable, however."

No doubt the old man had been lately meditating a great deal upon death, and his possible lot when that event should occur; but like the wisest philosopher of old, he could get little farther by his own reasonings than the narrow coffin and

the six-feet grave. Here, indeed, many a sage philosopher did actually stop, and could not even conjecture what would become of him beyond, except that his body would rot away into dust. Nature, indeed, saw all her children dismantled of their earthly trappings, and, whether prince or peasant, alike reduced to a few dry, senseless ashes, or utterly consumed and lost, as it seemed, in the depths of the mouldering earth ; she beheld this, and in sorrow too, but her eye, however anxious, could pierce no farther. Old South, not bewildered by philosophical doubts, or disturbed by apparent natural impossibilities, believed what he had heard, that death was not the final extinction of the man ; and so, without understanding the matter, he attached some sort of life, and sense, and consciousness even to the corpse. In our dreams, I believe, we go no farther than our knowledge ; our waking fancy only assembles together, and generally in great disorder, the images with which we are already familiar ; and, if there be any novelty, it is merely in the strange combinations of known things. Assuming, therefore, on this ground, that the ideas of my aged patient, with respect to the other world, were still very limited and deficient, although he had often been at church, and had sometimes heard *me* speak upon the subject, even this very morning, I endeavoured to enlighten him in the follow-

ing manner. His wife too needed it more than himself.

“ Well,” I said, “ my poor old friend, your dream was so far right, that, when you are dead, you will still know yourself; that you are the same person who lived here for such or such a time, and did such and such things. But this knowledge will belong to your soul only; and your soul will certainly not be confined, as I have already told you both, in the same coffin or grave with your body, or in any narrow place whatever; it will go away at once with your last breath to God who gave it you at the first. When it comes to *him*, he will judge it immediately; and, if he finds it to be a good soul, he will send it to a good place, or, if a bad soul, to a bad place, to be kept there until the end of this world. In the mean time your body, without your soul, and without any sense or feeling at all belonging to it, not knowing whether it is warm or cold, comfortable or uncomfortable, or anything that may happen to it, will lie in the dust of the earth and become dust itself, and have no shape or likeness of flesh about it. This will be the state of the body until the end of this world is come; which will be whenever God pleases to have it so; that is, when he has finished all the counsels and designs which he had in making it. Now then, observe and understand, the end of the world being come, God will cause all our bodies,

all at once to spring up again from the dust; either by making them over again, as he made the first body, out of the dust; or by their growing up, like corn or any other grain, from seed. You know that the seed rots as our bodies will; and so from our rotting bodies, as from the rotting seed, there may grow up new bodies, if God has appointed it to be thus; for everything depends on *his* appointment, and he does everything just as he pleases. In whatever way he does it, he will do it in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; a huge trumpet will be blown by an archangel; the mighty sound of it will be heard in the four corners of the world at once; and up will start, on the instant, every one of our bodies, the bodies of all mankind, who have lived upon the earth from the beginning to the end; up they will start, as if they were roused and awaked suddenly out of a deep sleep; then the souls will be joined to them again, each to each his own, as they were before death; and we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to hear the last sentence pronounced upon us, which sentence will doom us to hell or heaven for ever. The good souls will have been happy in the good place where God kept them, and the bad souls will have been miserable in the bad place; the good souls expecting and delighting in the thought of greater happiness to come, but the bad souls, expecting and trem-

bling at the thought of greater misery ; so at last the greater happiness and the greater misery will come indeed, heaven and hell, to crown the longings of the one, and to verify the horrors of the other. But no mortal man can describe, or know, what heaven and hell will be ; what pleasures, what joys, what glories, there will be in heaven ; what pains and torments, what woes and sorrows, what shame and miseries in hell. There is nothing like the one or the other in this world ; but it is enough to say that heaven is the dwelling-place of God, and hell the dwelling-place of the devil. Ah ! my poor old friends, ponder all that I have told you in your hearts and minds when I am gone, and till I come again, which shall be to-morrow, if God will. I will then talk to you about the sacrament."

Thus saying, and putting money into the old woman's hand, I hastened away pleased with *them*, and pleased with my own reflections. But how inscrutable are the ways of Providence !

§ II.—THE SAME, AND OTHERS.

The next morning, as I approached, I saw a great bustling about the cottage-door ; but by the time that I came round the whole building to

enter, all was still, and every person quiet within. They had seen me coming, no doubt. In the outer room stood Mrs. Costar, Mrs. Harwich, and other women. They were quite silent, and looked sad. I passed them without daring to ask what was the matter; but I expected to see old South a corpse, and began to wonder that the old woman had not met me to tell me. Upon entering the inner room the old man appeared at once seated by the fire. I looked round for the old woman; but what did I see? A clean white sheet stretched over the bed, and the manifest impression of a corpse beneath the sheet. Could this be *hers*? It was. Immediately the old man betrayed the melancholy fact. When he caught my eye, he dropped his head between his knees, and began to sob and wail aloud in the most piteous manner. I advanced up to his side, and then, turning towards the door, I had all the women, who followed me instantly, just in front of me. There I stood in silence, deeply affected, and collecting my spirits and my thoughts.

At length, the old man continuing to sob and wail, Mrs. Costar exclaimed, "Do not fret yourself so, Mr. South;" and then she said to *me*, "I tell him, Sir, over and over again, not to fret himself, but he *will* do it, in spite of my good advice, Sir." "I doubt whether your advice be good, Mrs. Costar," I replied, very much to the surprise

of herself and all the rest, as it seemed by their countenances. “ I should be sorry to see him with dry eyes, and with a calm, unruffled mind, in his present awful circumstances ; I should be very sorry to see him otherwise than deeply touched, and disturbed, when his wife lies dead unexpectedly within his view, and he himself has a foot almost in the grave. If, indeed, they had both of them been well prepared by the sanctity of their lives to render their account to their great Judge, I might have advised as you have done. Some sorrow I would still have allowed upon the breaking up so suddenly of so long a connexion in this world, but I would have reminded him to sorrow not as one without hope ; I would have reminded him that the poor creature was released from a world of misery to be admitted into a world of everlasting happiness, and that he himself would soon make the same rich exchange, and follow her. But now I do not dare to dissuade him from fretting, and from bemoaning his condition with every token of grief that he can. When I consider what has been the constant practice of the lives of both of them ; how very offensive it must have been to Almighty God ; how many things they have done which they ought to have left undone, and how many things they have left undone which they ought to have done ; I tremble for *her* soul, the lot of which is already

decided, and I tremble for *his*, which will be decided shortly. And can I then advise him not to fret himself in so tremendous a situation? To be tranquil and composed, as if some trivial thing had happened, or were about to happen? To sit at his ease, when a precious immortal soul is at stake, whether it shall be saved or lost for ever; and that soul his own? It is too true, by no fretting can he alter the lot of hers; were he to refuse to be comforted any more, *her* lot is fixed without the possibility of a change. But, if it be an unhappy lot; if her poor soul be ruined, can he be so soon regardless of it? Can he forget so soon, how greatly he himself has been the cause of her woe, by not reproving her for her offences against God; by not checking and controlling her; by not being a pattern to her of temperance and piety; nay, by conniving at her sins, and, what is still worse, by joining in them, and encouraging them? Can he ever forget this, whilst he remembers anything, and so cease to fret for *her*, and for himself? It is not good advice, therefore, which you give him, Mrs. Costar; the best thing which he can do now is to grieve, and to grieve deeply in his very heart, if he might thus but move the gracious Beings above, his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, to have pity upon him, and save him from a greater and more lasting grief hereafter. Did you never read in your Bible

about King David, when his conscience smote him for his sins, how he threw himself on the hard, cold ground, and lay there night and day, although he was a great king, and had soft, warm beds to lie upon ; and would neither eat nor drink anything, but made tears, and sighs, and groans, his only food ? His dear friends and faithful servants, although not wise, came, like *you*, and besought him not to fret himself thus, or to treat himself with such cruel and mournful severity. Silly people ! They thought, perhaps, that, being a king, he might do nothing but enjoy his greatness ; wear his royal robes and crown, sit on his throne of state, order the rich banquet to be spread before him, and the minstrels to soothe his wounded spirit with harps and songs. But he would none of their counsel ; he abhorred himself, and all the emblems of grandeur ; music, and feasting, and the pride of kingly majesty, he would none of it. So he persisted to fret and afflict himself, like one of the meanest of his own subjects ; too well knowing that, although a king, he had a master in heaven, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, one, who, when provoked, will smite the guilty with the terrible blast of his fury. Thus did King David ; and, as he was once a great sinner, so will he always be to the end of the world an example of the greatest and truest penitent, whom probably the world will ever see.

When we fall into sin, Mrs. Costar, let us copy after *him*, and advise our poor old friend here to do the same. He seems, indeed, to be doing it. This sorrow of his, if it be the fruit of an humble and contrite heart, will please all the inhabitants of heaven, and must on no account be stopped by *us*; it may save his soul alive."

Here I paused and began to think what I ought to say to the old man himself; but happening to turn my eyes towards the bed, Mrs. Costar came forwards, and asked me if I wished her to strip down the sheet, and uncover the face of the corpse. "By no means," I answered, in some trepidation; for it was a sight which I never desired to see, and more particularly now; but I found it rather difficult to prevent her from forcing the sight upon me. However, the space between the bed and the old man's chair being very narrow, in which space I myself stood firm, she could not pass me to get to the head of the bed; and, on the other side, the bed touched the wall. So, at length, after an ineffectual attempt to reach from below me up to the top of the sheet, she desisted and retired. A second time something occurred, which created the same fancy, that I wished to see the corpse; but I still stood in her way, and she was as unsuccessful as before. The third endeavour, however, accomplished her purpose. I was stooping towards the old man, and accidentally left an inch

or two more of interval, which she eagerly seized, and in an instant, having turned down the sheet, she withdrew to her former station. Immediately, when I raised myself upright again, the countenance of the dead woman caught my eye. I expected to see what would excite a sensation of pain and loathsomeness. Such had been the effect of her countenance whilst alive, which must be increased, I thought, when dead. But it was not so ; a clear paleness had succeeded to the dark purple tint, which betrayed the habitual indulgence of a brutal appetite ; the eye-lids and mouth being closed, two ill features were gone ; and her cheeks, although still bloated, were now perfectly clean, and bespoke the diligence of the women. In short, hideous in life, she was not without handsomeness in death. So I thought, and so seemed all the rest to think ; or, perhaps, they were only pleased with showing me how much they had done in how short a time.

But I was in the act of talking when this took place. After having first repressed Mrs. Costar, I asked the old man, in a soothing voice, whether his own disorder was abated at all. " You are sitting now upon a chair," I said ; " you could not have done this yesterday, I believe." " No, Sir," he replied, with sobs ; " I could not, indeed ; I don't know how I do it now ; I am forced to do it as well as I can ; they put me here in the middle

of the night, and I have been here ever since ; I *must* have more strength, I think." In fact, with the help of all the ragged fragments of bedding, blankets, quilts, and clothes, which could be mustered together, the whole property of the family, they had bolstered him up in an antique crazy chair, even more antique and crazy than himself, and had supported his legs and feet in so skilful a manner, that the fatigue of his position was very little more than it would have been in bed ; at least in such a bed as he had quitted for the purpose of assigning it to the sole possession of the corpse. But what he had endured in this interval baffles all my powers of description. A hundred horrible particulars, which must have happened, flashed over my imagination, one after another, and absolutely appalled it. Any one of them by itself would have been intolerable even to *me* ; how much more to persons who are only familiar with luxury and refinement ! But extreme poverty, nursed and educated in sufferance and necessity, and constantly struggling with them, begets the power of bearing everything. Yet we, who are rich, or comparatively so, ought to be sensitively alive to the misery which is sustained by those below us, and to employ ourselves actively in alleviating it ; and one reason why I enter so often, and so minutely, into the detail of this misery, is with the view of inspiring my

readers with such a humane feeling, and with the beneficence consequent upon it, which is most lovely in the sight of God and man. These old people, indeed, had brought some of their misery wilfully upon themselves ; but there is enough ordained by Providence, *for the sake of the rich*.

After a moment's reflection, I resumed the conversation thus :—" God has been gracious to you," I said, " in giving you a little more strength to bear the inconveniences, which have come upon you so suddenly and unexpectedly ; perhaps he will restore you to your former state of bodily health altogether. You see, he can strike down ; perhaps you will see that he can raise up. Certainly he can, if he will ; whatever the doctors may say of your being a poor old creature, for whom medicine can do no good. Medicine may have no power, but God has. However, after such a warning, you may be sure that the remnant of your days will be short, and that you will soon follow *her*. *You* thought to have gone before *her* ; we all thought so ; she herself thought to have been after *you*, but she is gone first ; and you will lay *her* in the grave, instead of *her* laying *you* there. I desire all the rest of you to mark this, how uncertain human life is ; and, therefore, how very possible it is, that this old man, fifty years older than any of you, may, nevertheless, follow every one of you to your graves, as he may

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his own wife. There will be scarcely anything more wonderful in it. There is no wonder that a woman of fourscore years should die; but yesterday the death of this poor old woman was as far from your thoughts as the death of any one of yourselves. She complained of sickness, but nobody amongst you once thought that to-day they should see her laid out for her burial, and that they should lay her out themselves with their own hands. Are you so blind as not to understand, that the same blow which smote *her* fatally last night, may smite any one of *you* as fatally this night? And that to-morrow I may enter one of *your* cottages, and see one of *you* dead, as I do *her* to-day? How then are you prepared, all of you, for so sudden a termination of life? What have you been thinking about it? What changes have you already made in your conduct, or what resolutions to make a great change? For without a very great change you are all utterly lost for ever. I fear for *you*, even more than I did for this poor old creature who lies here. *Her* death will aggravate your condition, if you take no warning from it. You, Mrs. Costar, and you, Mrs. Harwich, were often in the drunken revels of the unhappy Mary Brockbourn, even in the last which occasioned her death by the hands of her own husband; could there be a greater warning than *that*? Yet you, Mrs. Costar, on the

following Sunday, God's holy Sabbath, were intoxicated again, and defied the Almighty to his very face. You repented afterwards, I believe; but how are you prepared at this instant to meet your Judge? Mary Brockbourn went up to him with little preparation, or none; this poor creature is now gone with very little, after a long life of sin that required much. Some preparation she *did* make, God be thanked for it! I can bear witness to one great fact, that she denied her sins no longer; she would no longer add lies to drunkenness; she confessed to *me* and to God, that she was a great sinner. In this she was better prepared than *you*, Mrs. Costar and Mrs. Harwich; you denied with vehemence. O Father of mercies! O God of infinite goodness! hast thou spared her for this? Is her poor soul now in thy safe keeping for heaven at last? Confession is pleasing to *thee*; it bespeaks sorrow, humility, and a longing after forgiveness; all which thou approvest and wilt bless. But heaven—what an unspeakable blessing is *that*! Wilt thou bless her with heaven, and blot out everything else, because her tongue had ceased to lie, and uttered only truth, and confessed sin in the language of an humble heart? Ah! thou hast awfully said, that sin must be forsaken too, as well as confessed; and who can tell, but thou, whether this poor old creature had forsaken it?"

This tremendous reflection caused me to pause, whilst I dwelt upon it painfully in my thoughts, and wished my hearers to do the same; but also a storm had come on, which was now raging with great fury, and almost drowned my voice even in this small apartment. The bitter blast shook the old man in his chair, and threatened every instant to burst in the window and the door; the rain poured down in torrents, and began to stream amongst us through every unstopped rent and cranny in the roof, the ceiling, and the walls. Used as they were to this in so unsheltered a spot, and in such crazy cottages, they now seemed, for the first time probably, to connect it with awful ideas of God's power; and there was not a single countenance which had not a strong expression of alarm depicted upon it. The dead woman, indeed, she alone lay in serene imperturbable peace. No tumult or strife of the elements can disturb *her*, until they melt at last with fervent heat, and roll up together like a scroll, and then vanish with a mighty crash for ever. This alone will awake and arouse the sleeping bodies of the dead.

After a short but solemn interval I was about to continue the course of my reasonings; but, having begun as I ended, “God only knows, the very God who rides in this whirlwind, he only knows whether this poor creature had forsaken her besetting sin.” Mrs. Harwich interposed, and

said, " She had quite forsaken it, Sir, I am sure." " Then God be thanked again," I exclaimed, " if *that* be true. Confessing and forsaking, too, are the whole of God's demand; if they be done in Christ's name, and without any claim of merit to ourselves, he will blot out all the past that is written in God's book against us, and will turn over a new leaf, and begin a new reckoning. But my good Mrs. Harwich, how are you so sure that she had left off drinking?" " She had no money, Sir, she said, to buy drink with; so she was forced to leave it off." " Ah! Mrs. Harwich," I cried mournfully, " now you have destroyed all my comfort; all the comfort which you gave me before. Leaving off drinking because you have no money to buy drink with, is not what God means by forsaking sin. No, it must be forsaken, and renounced whilst we have the full power to indulge in it, if we choose to do so. To leave it off, because you cannot commit it, will never save any of your souls. You must hate it, and abhor it; you must hate and abhor yourselves for committing it; you must resolve never to commit it any more; you must pray in Christ's name for pardon, and for strength to keep your resolution. Now who can tell me that this poor old creature had done all this?"

" Ah! Sir," the poor old man now interposed himself, and looking up in my face most piteously,

sobbing too, as before, and as he had done frequently when what I said came home to his heart ; “ ah ! Sir, she has been always praying since you saw her yesterday.” “ Yes, Sir,” said Mrs. Costar, “ and she begged *me* to read to her, and to pray for her.” “ Poor soul !” I exclaimed ; “ she was sincere, I hope and trust.” “ Yes, *that* she was,” cried Mrs. Harwich. “ When was it,” I asked, “ that she first appeared to be in danger ?” “ At midnight,” said the old man. “ She was very unked like, all the evening, and could not touch anything, and tottered about to get me what I wanted ; and when she came to bed to me, she could not sleep, and called to me over and over again to tell her the little prayer which you taught us both long ago, Sir. At last came the cramp in both her feet, and ran up her legs, and she did nothing but scream with the pain of it.” “ And how did you get any help,” I asked, “ helpless as you are yourself ?” “ I made shift to get out of bed,” he replied, “ and crawled to the wall, and punched it with my spade-handle, till I waked Mrs. Costar.” “ Yes,” said Mrs. Costar, “ and when I came, Sir, I found Mr. South on the ground, not far from the bed-side.” “ I crawled back,” said the old man, “ but I could not get into bed again ; so I lay there till they got this chair ready for me.” “ Did you send for the doctor ?” I asked. “ No, Sir,” replied Mrs. Harwich ; “ she would not let us. I

came in next, and John, my husband would have run for him ; but she said it was of no use ; the cramp was running up her body, and would soon be at her heart. And so it proved, Sir ; but all the time she kept screaming and begging of us to pray for her ; and she prayed for herself too as well as she could. The last thing she did, Sir, was to shake hands with Mr. South ; we carried him closer to the bed-side to take leave of her. Then she was no more."

The description of the parting-scene was too much for the old man, and now he wept and sobbed more than ever. " Well," I said, " she suffered sadly, I fear ; but her sufferings were not long, and they did not prevent her from calling upon her God and Saviour in her time of need. Cheer up, my old friend ; there is hope for her poor soul ! She set about the salvation of it very late ; but when she began she was in earnest, I believe ; and God will never cast out those who come to him in earnest, although they come to him at the very last hour of the day. So gracious is he, that he says nothing about time. Be it when it will that we get the temper which he loves, immediately he pities us, as an earthly father pities his own penitent child, and then he forgives and saves. This poor creature, as it appeared to *me* when I left her yesterday, though she little thought that death was so near, would have washed my

feet with her tears, and wiped them with her grey hairs ; so humble did she seem, and so desirous of pardon and mercy. If the blessed Jesus had been here then, he would have spoken peace to her at once, as he did to many a sincere penitent. I persuade myself that he *was* here, though we did not see him with our eye. Wherever there is a contrite heart, there he is certainly. Cheer up, therefore, my old friend ! God has said that the last shall be first. May this gracious promise have been already fulfilled in *her*, and may it be fulfilled in *you !*" The old man sobbed out, "Amen," which was re-echoed by all the women in the room.

A spark of devotion now seeming to be kindled amongst them, I knelt down between the dying and the dead. The women followed my example, one here, one there, without bidding. Then closing my hands, and lifting them upwards, as well as I could with the same incumbrances as yesterday, I said, solemnly, "Let us pray," and began thus at once. "O Almighty and most merciful Father ! we humble ourselves before thee, and confess, not only with our lips, but also with our hearts, that we are sinners in thy sight, and that we deserve punishment and death at thy hands. Often before hast thou graciously warned us by afflictions of our own to think of our offences against thee, and to take care of our souls ; often

hast thou made us to see death in various and terrible forms, that we may be roused by it, and strive without delay to be the better prepared to meet death ourselves whenever, and in whatever form, it may come. And now we are kneeling here with the work of death under our very eye. It hath pleased *thee* to take away the soul of this our poor sister, and to grant her no more time of preparation for eternity. She was beginning to pray to thee for the salvation of her soul; but thou hast cut her off, and she can pray no more. The living, the living alone, they can still continue to pray for pardon and mercy. But soon, perhaps, *we* shall be stretched out in death, like *her*, and *our* tongues will be dumb. O grant, therefore, that we may all of us earnestly seize the opportunities which thou givest us, and not abuse by any new delays thy long-suffering and forbearance. Thou callest us now and shovest us thy terrible power; O grant that we may see thee speaking to us in this corpse, and that we may make haste to put our houses in order before thou striketh *us*, and summonest us to meet thee for everlasting judgment. O Lord God, thou hast awfully told us by thy Son Jesus Christ, that few only shall be saved; and how can *we* expect to be amongst those few, negligent, careless, thoughtless sinners as we are? Wilt thou spare *us* to a distant hoary age, as thou didst our poor sister here, and as

thou still sparest this our old afflicted brother, and then give us hearts to pray to thee, and to repent of our past lives, and to cast an anxious look towards the cross of Christ, and to seek after the heavenly graces of thy Holy Spirit? Most justly mightest thou be full of wrath and indignation against us, if *we* put off our repentance under such a presumptuous and sinful confidence; most justly mightest thou cause us to feel the bitterness of our own folly, by condemning us for ever. If thou graciously sparedst these aged people, although their repentance was late, thou wilt not spare *us* who wilfully defer our repentance in the hope of the same mercy. O Lord, I beseech thee, give these persons, here kneeling before thee, an awful sense of the great uncertainty of life, and the unspeakable value of their own souls, that from this very moment they may turn to *thee* with sorrow unfeigned for the past, and steadfast purposes of keeping all thy commandments for the future. Look mercifully upon them, O most merciful Father, for this charitable work of theirs towards the sad remains of their aged neighbour; without the prospect of any reward upon earth they have thus done honour to her corpse, and prepared it with due respect for her burial. Do *thou* reward them for this unasked, unpurchased labour of their hands by blessing every wish and every endeavour for the salvation of their souls. I ask this of thee

for Jesus Christ's sake, who died on earth upon the cross, that our souls might live for ever in heaven."

Here I finished ; then rising upon my feet I prepared to depart, the tempest having now swept along far beyond us, and having left nothing in its rear but a patterning shower. A question, however, which I put to the old man, led to a long but uninteresting conversation about his own and his wife's history, which was at last terminated by my asking him when he intended to bury her. " This same day next week, Sir," he answered. " And where," I said, " do you propose to remain yourself during all that interval?" " Where I am now, Sir," he replied without hesitation. " But have you considered," I said, " all the possible evils of being for so long a time in the same small apartment with a dead body?" " I can bear everything easily," he answered. " I will not lose sight of the body or the coffin, Sir, if I can, till they cover it up with earth in the churchyard. Please God to restore me my strength a little, I will go with it to the grave myself. We have lived together many a long year ; we will only part *there*." " And God send you a happy meeting again in heaven," I said, as I passed the threshold ; the old man ratifying my good wish, with mingled sobs and amens.

The children from the neighbouring cottages,

who attended the charity-schools, having informed me daily that his health was getting better and better, I forbore to visit him again; and on the appointed day he appeared at the funeral, supported by two persons, one on each side, to prop his faltering steps. During the solemn ceremony I did not venture to cast a look towards him, especially as I heard sounds of sorrow proceeding from the groupe which surrounded him. But when it was over, and it mattered no longer how much I might be affected by the spectacle, I viewed him leisurely where he stood, on the very margin of the grave, upon the earth which had been thrown out of it, with his head bent forwards, surveying the coffin below. Never, perhaps, before was such a suit of mourning seen to distinguish a mourner in chief; no long black cloke, no scarf, no hatband, no gloves; nothing supernumerary of any kind or sort whatever. The only funeral emblem that he wore was a pair of black worsted stockings, which no doubt he had borrowed for the occasion; for on the following day I saw him without them. On his feet were old list shoes of motley colours, which contrasted well with his black stockings above. Coat he had none, but only a waistcoat with sleeves; the buttons of which having mostly disappeared, it was fastened at his neck and in divers places below with pieces of cord. Of what tint this

waistcoat had been in its pristine days when it was fresh from the dyer, no mortal now could say. On his head he wore a white nightcap; white it was certainly to a distant eye, but of a dingy ground, and spotted and blotched abundantly. There lacks nothing, methinks, to complete this portrait of wretchedness; thus he stood, the scum and refuse of mankind, the offscouring of all things! What a country is ours of great extremes, princely wealth, and the most abject poverty! Foreigners are dazzled, and we are dazzled ourselves with our own power and glory, which are founded partly upon our wealth; but there are vast numbers amongst us, like old South, without being drunkards like *him*, who have nothing for their portion but rags and wretchedness.

But neither age, nor misery, nor scorn, had extinguished the feelings of the man and the husband. On the contrary, the blunted edge was sharpened now by the fresh momentous knowledge which had been gradually instilled into him. Now he could shed a tear for the eternal lot of himself and of *her*, whose coffin he was contemplating with a fixed and anxious gaze. He was firmer than on the day of her death, and did nothing unseemly or misbecoming his years. Evidently, I thought, he was dwelling upon the idea that he should soon be laid by her side, and praying that their lot

might be happy. I saw his lips move, and his look and attitude, without words, explained his meditation. Peace be with *him* and with *her*!

When they began to lead him away from the grave, the sexton shovelling in the earth, I retired aloof, and desired the clerk to tell the old man to come to me on the following day. It was a prayer-day ; so he came without bidding to church, and when the service was over he waited with his hat off at the gates to receive my commands. He had now a singular addition to his dress of yesterday. It was a mantle, thrown over his waist-coat, in shape such as gay courtiers and cavaliers wore in the olden time of our history. The colour was brown, but there were large patches here and there of blue, red, and yellow. From whence this came was to *me* quite inexplicable ; but when I described it to Mrs. Warton, she solved my puzzle at once. Some ten years ago a thick, warm, brown cloth-coat, the bequest of one of the pious benefactors of the parish, had been given to the old woman by the parish officers, and she had used it to her dying day ; but after the hard and long service which it had seen there is no wonder that the sleeves were now entirely gone, and much of the original material besides ; so that a caviller might have plausibly disputed whether it was the identical coat, the gift of the parish or not. The old man, however, with the help probably of Mrs.

Costar and Mrs. Harwich, had cut off the skirts, which had been too often draggled and soaked in the mire, and had worked the sleeveless remnant into the flowing mantle which surprised me so much. The thought and the workmanship were both ingenious ; and at all events the old man would have been better protected than before from the cold blast and the pelting showers.

After examining his dress for a moment or two, I said, “ Why, my old friend, with all this contrivance, you are still but in a bad plight for a man of your age, who ought to have warmer and better clothing. This will not do. I have got a coat and breeches for you as good as new. I will make an almsman of you. I depend upon you to set a right example to the rest. You are improved greatly, and you now deserve the appointment. Every Sunday too, at these gates you shall receive a couple of shillings. With your new clothes you would come to church of your own will, I am sure ; but I am determined that it shall be for your good in this world as well as in the next. A short time since it would have been dangerous to have given you two shillings on a Sunday ; now I can trust you ; you have the fear of God before your eyes. But you must lose no time in striving to go on from one improvement to another until you love God as much as you fear him now. When the love of him casts out the fear of him,

then will you enjoy, if you reach that happy condition, a peace of mind which passeth man's understanding in any other state."

All this was so sudden and unexpected to the poor old creature, that I saw ready to break out, whenever I might stop, a great tumult of mingled surprise, and joy, and gratitude. I did not wish to encounter it; so, upon pronouncing the last word, I vanished in an instant, and left him to soliloquise with himself.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. BOLTON—HAPPY OLD AGE.

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§ 1. MRS. BOLTON.

MANY an interesting conversation have I had with this excellent old lady. I will record one which occurred when she had passed the great limit of fourscore years. The reader, I am sure, will desire to know more of her than he does already from the little snatches of her history which he may have gleaned in other dialogues.

One Monday morning I called upon her with several of my children, to whom she had promised to show a spinning-wheel, with which she sometimes amused herself. There was scarcely a person besides, I believe, in my extensive and populous parish, who possessed such an instrument, once the constant companion of every female of every rank. We found her reading without spectacles a very small book, which, I saw afterwards, had also a very small type. Upon my entering the room in which she was sitting, she rose immediately, and met me in the midway, and presented

her hand ; and before I could ask her how she did, she said, with some of the vivacity of youth, “ My best thanks to you, Dr. Warton, for your instructive discourse yesterday morning ; I hope I shall hear it again.”

She had said the same thing to me several times before, and I had always been much gratified by such an observation ; not only because there was an implied commendation of myself, but also because it showed great propriety of feeling and judgment, as well as humility, in *her*. On other occasions, however, I had been silent, or only expressed simply the pleasure which she gave me by her approbation of my labours : now I said, “ You differ, I fear, my dear Madam, from too many of my audience. The general passion is for novelty ; and I know very well, because they have told me so themselves, that several persons wish to have shorter sermons than mine of yesterday.” “ Novelty, my dear Sir !” she replied, with the same vivacity ; “ what novelty can any body expect or desire in religion ? and whilst we advance so slowly as we do in the path of our duty, why should we complain of being kept too long to hear what our duty is, and our danger in neglecting it ? If we were perfect, Dr. Warton, we might pretend that the time spent in hearing was so much taken from doing ; but we have plenty of time for doing, nevertheless. Aye, aye, my dear



Sir, the reason is, that we cannot resolve to practise, and so we dislike to hear."

This remark was excellent ; and she accompanied it with a little shake of her head and a turn of her eye peculiar to herself, which convinced me that she was quite in earnest. "Pray, my dear Madam," I said, smiling, "do not include yourself amongst those who cannot resolve to practise, and therefore dislike to hear : you both willingly hear and resolve to practise too ; and, what is still better, you do actually practise." "Dr. Warton," she replied gravely, "take care that you do not lead me astray. I am come to an age when it is high time for me to look closely into myself ; and when I do it, I see abundance that is amiss : but, thank God ! I am not yet too old to mend, although an octogenarian. I am the better for what I heard yesterday ; and when I hear the same again, as I hope to do, I may be better still ; at least I shall see whether I have made any progress in the interval."

Here she stopped, but suddenly resumed thus : "Upon second thoughts, my dear Sir, I should rather that you would give me the discourse to read leisurely by myself. At *my* age," she added, looking significantly, "I have no right to expect the indulgence of new opportunities for anything." "Then," I said, "I shall not be able to preach it before you again ; after reading it, you will not

tolerate it any more." "You may safely dismiss that fear, Dr. Warton," she replied, laughing, and looking more significantly; "unless you are very quick indeed, I shall be out of your way." "We will leave *that*," I said, "where I know you wish it to be left; perhaps the preacher himself will be gone first. In fact, I am the elder of the two." "How is *that*, Dr. Warton?" she inquired with surprise." "Compare, then," I said. "Which has the best eyes? I will begin there." "It is very true," she replied; "my eyes are very good still. I have reason to be deeply thankful to Providence for it. I astonish every body by using no spectacles. With my habits of reading, and fond as I am of flowers, a defect of sight would be a great calamity to me, I confess. As I am, I enjoy to the last what has been my constant pursuit and amusement. I am grateful, Dr. Warton, I hope; I ought to be, I am sure."

This was accompanied by a tear from each eye. She never spoke of the blessings of Providence without a little visible emotion. Thankfulness was deeply seated in her heart, and she could not restrain it from overflowing. Being touched myself, I was silent for a moment, and availed myself of the pause to conduct her to her seat, where I also sat down by her side. Then I said, "You shall have the sermon by all means, my dear Madam; but the reading it so soon after hearing

it will be a disadvantage to the sermon itself. It will lose every particle of freshness, and seem flat, I fear. Be this, however, as it may, you shall have it. But I must observe that, although *you* can dispense with novelties in religion, yet *that* skill and talent are generally well bestowed, which put old things into a new dress, and excite thereby the greater attention to them ; but then the new dress itself may too soon become familiar by being frequently seen, and so lose its effect. The mass of men must be treated on this principle. We must comply with the very humours and frailties of our congregations to do them good ; I mean, of course, such a compliance as is not improper in any way : I mean that a preacher should not content himself with saying what is good, and continually repeating the same, but should study how to say it in a striking manner, and allow a considerable interval to elapse before he preaches his sermons a second time." "Are you aware," she interposed, "that a person of high authority,—I forget whom,—giving directions to the clergy about their sermons, states it as his opinion, that it is sufficient to have a stock for one year, and that it will be an advantage, rather than otherwise, to preach them annually?" "Certainly," I replied, "we may put within the compass of fifty sermons everything that is essential to the instruction of our flocks from the pulpit : there is room enough

for the milk and the strong meat too. But I am persuaded that the known repetition of the same sermons annually, or even triennially, although with corrections and improvements besides, would not suit the present times ; and whoever fell into such a practice would ill correspond to the example of St. Paul, who became all things to all men, that he might save the more."

" Well, well, Dr. Warton," she said, laughing again, " I will not quarrel with any body who takes pains, and who can go on for several years without preaching an old discourse over again ; but I shrewdly suspect that, when he has passed the number fifty, he will only be preaching old discourses upon new texts." " It is very true," I replied ; " at least I can answer for my own, that they run into one another perpetually ; so, in point of fact, there is only the appearance of a new sermon, and not the reality. The people are deceived, and like to be so ; the new text seems to ensure a new sermon, and they sit contented." " We should always sit contented," she said, " if we went to church with the intention of being improved by the discourse ; but if we go with any other view, we may or may not, as things turn out. If we go to hear novelties, or eloquence, or old things in a new dress, and find nothing but our plain, simple duty, plainly and simply expounded, we shall be disappointed, no doubt, although we

may have *heard* what is of the utmost importance for us to *do*. But what is your opinion of this, Dr. Warton? Do you think that, if we are not improved by the plain, simple way of stating old truths, we shall be improved by rhetorical flourishes?" "My dear Madam," I answered, "if we go to church merely for the sake of rhetorical flourishes, we shall certainly not be improved, although we may have abundance of them. We shall be pleased, and perhaps induced to go again for the same pleasure; but we shall not amend, or make any change whatever in our lives. This is true; but some people going there on religious grounds, are yet so dull in the application of things to their own benefit, that they must be roused by statements, and arguments, and exhortations, and admonitions, which have an air of novelty or eloquence about them, and are delivered with spirit and energy. A preacher tame in his manner and matter, or repeating the same things after short intervals before they are forgotten, will not reach or stir the consciences of such people; and to such people, who constitute the great body of our audience, not to right-minded individuals, not to the Mrs. Boltons, must we adapt our discourses, if we would reasonably expect them to produce generally a good effect."

"Come, come, my dear Sir," she said, evidently not wishing her own conduct and opinions to be

contrasted with those of other people ; “ I must give up the point if you talk so. I must not seem to set myself up above my neighbours.” “ You have brought this upon yourself,” I replied, laughing, “ by being so unfashionable as to ask to read a sermon to-day which you heard preached yesterday.” “ Why,” she said, “ to tell you the truth, it made me aware of a deficiency which never struck me so clearly and forcibly at any other time. And though I remember a good deal of your reasoning, which may be profitable for me to meditate upon when I am alone, yet, I think, if I had the whole discourse before me, I should quicken my pace, and, what will be wise for *me*, arrive at my end so much the sooner.” “ It would be wise for every body, my dear Madam,” I replied, seriously, “ to quicken their pace with some good end in view, be their age whatever it may. Yet every body did not seem to think so yesterday. A few there were certainly, who, so far from desiring to read my discourse to-day, would have been glad never to have heard it at all : it absolutely put them to sleep.” “ I never saw any such thing, Dr. Warton,” she interposed, hastily, “ whilst you were preaching ; you preach with too much animation to suffer people to sleep.” “ I preach as I feel, my dear Madam,” I said ; “ but I assure you I saw two or three people yesterday very drowsy during the whole discourse ; and I concluded that I was

myself very flat and tame, or that those persons tacitly assumed that they did not want my instructions upon the point which I was handling. No doubt, if it were mentioned to them, they would deny the justness of the latter inference, and would say, in their own defence, that they were wearied with the length of my discourse. But in this they would deceive themselves; for I observed the drowsiness creeping over them from the beginning. With *my* eyes I cannot read small print; but I can read faces and hearts very distinctly; and I sometimes observe a person looking at the clock when the text is given, and abandoning himself to despair at once, under the terrible apprehension that sit he must, for upwards of half an hour, whether entertained or not. Persons confessedly bad rarely or never do this; they have no fear of a long discourse, but only of the subject-matter, and of the lashes which may be incidentally inflicted upon them; whereas your good persons (I mean persons who think themselves good, and who are really free from all gross vices) sit with great uneasiness, and would have short sermons if they could." "Well, Dr. Warton," she said with archness; "but they should take pity upon the rest of us, who do not think ourselves good, and who wish at all events to be much better than we are at present; and who know of no other so probable a way of becoming better, as by first

hearing about it from the pulpit, and afterwards at home examining ourselves closely, as to what we have heard, with the view of practising. A person, certainly, who has leisure and a good understanding, may read, and think, and accomplish something in that way for him slf; but the Sunday discourses, which are absolutely necessary for many, are, I believe, the best and shortest way for all. Vast numbers of us would never think of improvement at all, if it were not for the discourse, which therefore I never wish to have curtailed by a single line."

"I will tell you a little story," I said, "to the point. One of my curates, whom I considered to be delicate in health, was in the habit of preaching short sermons, and I did not think it right to press him to try to exceed his strength. But he himself was disturbed by the thinness of his congregation, and went about amongst the people to persuade them to come to church by the exertion of his personal influence. Almost the first person whom he encountered retorted upon him, that there was nothing to come to church for, alluding manifestly to the brevity of his sermons. Upon this he took the hint, and preached at greater length, and was gratified with seeing his audience immediately increase. In fact, short sermons, or delivering them in a hurried manner, or apparently at one's own ease, will always create a suspicion, that we

are not anxious about an affair of momentous importance ; and the consequence to our flocks will be ruinous in the extreme. If *we* do not seem to care for *them*, they will not care for themselves ; or, if they do, which is a great chance, they will go somewhere else."

" Now I will tell *you* a little story too," she said. " It is complimentary to you, although the same phrases in a polished mouth would be supposed to convey anything but praise." This awakened my curiosity, being rather enigmatical ; and I begged to be told the story, by all means. " A person below the middle rank," she resumed, " having come to me this morning on business, I asked him what he thought of your discourse yesterday, and from *that* he proceeded to talk of the general effect of your preaching. " Madam," he said, " the Doctor *dins* it into us ; with his earnest face and with his loud voice, he always *dins* it into us, Madam." When we had laughed together at this for a short time, " I speak loud naturally," I said ; " but if it were not natural to me, I should do it from judgment and policy ; first on general principles, that it shows zeal and earnestness ; secondly, that in *my* church it is absolutely necessary, if I would have all to hear me. In spite of my exertions, I observe distant persons leaning forward to catch what I say. I am too loud, no

doubt, for those who are near me ; but nothing less would reach the remote corners."

I am glad of an opportunity of calling the attention of my younger brethren to matters of this kind, which are of great importance. I had once thought of collecting together into a single chapter, under the title of "Preaching," whatever had occurred to me personally upon that deeply responsible portion of the business of a clergyman ; but, after more consideration, I determined to confine myself to an incidental mention of the several branches of the subject, as the better way of being generally useful. My lay readers at least might pass over a chapter with such a title ; but I am of opinion (in consequence of long experience) that, for many reasons, it would be well even for the laity to think a little upon these topics ; and more especially that, when they judge, their judgments may be founded upon good taste and sound principles.

" Well, well, my dear Sir," said Mrs. Bolton ; " I am one of those who are close to you, but I do not complain of your speaking too loud ; and I am pleased with finding, by enquiry, that you are heard generally in every part of the church. My only fear is that you will wear yourself out ; your fatigue is evidently very great. But come, I will now shew the children my spinning-wheel."

Upon this she opened the door of a closet, and

brought it out herself; and then, with a spirit and a good humour equally to be admired, she began to spin, turning the wheel with her right foot, drawing out the wool with the fingers of her left hand, applying the other hand wherever the machinery was in fault, and now and then, by an almost imperceptible touch of her lips, smoothing or separating every accidental undue excrescence of the thread. My elder children had lately been reading Catullus's highly-wrought description of the Fates spinning the thread of the destinies of Achilles. No wonder, as they told me afterwards, that they had now a lively picture of it, and comprehended exactly the poet and the operation. The three Fates, however, were here embodied into one, without any of the defects or deformities of old age usually ascribed to them; no tottering or feebleness of limb, no deepworn furrows in the cheek, no parched dryness on the lip. The foot was active, the fingers were pliant, the eye was not dim; nothing at this instant betokened the reverend period of fourscore years but the hoary head and the sober fashion of her dress. Every look beamed with cheerfulness; no care, no austerity wrinkled her brow. The Fates, whilst they spun, contracted their foreheads, and, wrapped up in a severe and sullen gloom, pondered the miseries interwoven with their threads. The face of Mrs. Bolton, as she answered the questions of the

children, and pursued her work, expanded with benevolence, and was lightened up with many a bright ray emanating from a kind heart. It was a sunset in a serene sky; the approach to the horizon made the orb greater, but the lustre more mild.

Thus I thought, as I stood a little retired from the busy scene, and contemplated in silence this beautiful portrait of an aged Christian, not weary of life, still capable of enjoying it herself, still desirous of sweetening it to others, even to children. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his!' a prophet once said; but confidence towards God springs from an uncondemning heart, said an apostle; and where is this to be found? The most solid righteousness is the belief and trust in a Saviour; Mrs. Bolton had this righteousness of faith; and in *her* it was no dead intellectual conviction; it had wrought in her heart, and was a perennial source of love and every good work. If in her own humility she condemned herself, nobody else condemned her; if in her own eyes she was lowly, she was exalted in the eyes of everybody else.

But it was now time to release her from her spinning wheel; yet she was not satisfied until all the children in their turns had made an attempt to imitate her, which created much merriment in the whole party. She laughed heartily herself,

but chiefly because she saw *them* so happy ; and their noise did not appear to disturb her at all. However, I despatched them into the garden to run about at their own pleasure, and thus Mrs. Bolton and myself were left alone. “ They will fatigue you, my dear Madam,” I said ; “ let them go ; you have encouraged them to become quite obstreperous with the amusement which you have given them.” “ Why,” she replied, “ they will probably wish now to have their own play by themselves, or else I would not part with them so easily. It is particularly delightful to me to see in *them* what I was myself at *their* age ; I can readily enter into their feelings, and enjoy them over again.” “ Your’s,” I said, “ is but a green old age yet ; with *your* health and buoyancy of spirits, and banishment of all anxious cares about uncertainties, and the power of turning your mind to a variety of rational pursuits, you make us all in love with it. It is one of the most agreeable sights imaginable ; but it is rare, my dear Madam.”

“ The rarity,” she replied, as we re-seated ourselves near each other, “ is this, my dear Sir ; to see one so blessed as I have been, and am now.” The tears came into her eyes, as she said this, but they did not prevent her from proceeding. “ My health, thank God, has always been excellent ; few have had better ; and there-

fore other old people must be excused, if their spirits are not so good as mine. In a long life, sickness, and many afflictions to boot, generally occur, and the spirits naturally suffer, and are depressed towards the end. I have had afflictions myself, Dr. Warton; I am the last of my own generation; I have survived those with whom I lived for three quarters of a century in the greatest harmony and affection; and it cost me a pang when, one after the other, although in a good old age, they were separated from me. But though my equals are gone, I am not left in solitude, Dr. Warton. Fresh generations are sprung up in my own family, and I love them all; and you yourself know, my dear Sir, how kind they are to *me*, and, old as I am, how good-naturedly and considerately they bear with all my particularities. When one of these is snatched away, against the order of nature, *that* afflicts me most, Dr. Warton; but it is a human weakness. For one who is wisest and best decides the question of fitness for us, and what have we therefore to say? As to future uncertainties, my dear Sir, it would be preposterous in *me* to be over-anxious, when I have not only all the necessaries of life about me, but every comfort besides which I could reasonably wish. In this respect, too, we must forgive others, if their old age be querulous; in the midst of abundance querulousness would be quite inex-

cusable. But I will tell you, Dr. Warton, what I find now to be the greatest of all the advantages which a gracious Providence has heaped upon me: I was born and brought up in a religious home; my father and mother lived in religious habits, and made the habits of their children the same. This was not merely an unbroken practice of reading the bible, and performing all outward religious duties, Dr. Warton; but a constant way of thinking and feeling inwardly. It would be ridiculous if I were to attempt to explain to *you* how such a circumstance gives the colour to a whole life. Do not imagine that I speak of any acquisition of goodness, my dear Sir; I am far from being what I might have been in consequence of that advantage of religious example and education; I allude to pleasure merely. Such a habit of thinking and feeling increases every joy, and diminishes every sorrow, and makes even the worst very tolerable. One thus circumstanced, and referring everything to Providence, cannot be unhappy, and is most likely to be generally cheerful."

This was admirable. I had heard the same things in parts incidentally before, but never together, nor in direct answer as now to any observation of my own; and the intimacy of my acquaintance with her had afforded me the full opportunity of watching how she was affected, and

of marking what her conduct was, when her aged kindred, riper than herself in years, dropped into their graves, like mellow fruit from the tree, and left her at last a solitary but a noble specimen of growth in every Christian grace. The rest of the family were almost as well known to me in their own time as she was; but she came more often in my way than they did, because she was more active; and now being alone for a few years after them, I had studied her character with undivided attention and greater accuracy. During their sickness there could not be a kinder or more diligent nurse; she was always composed, and in full possession of herself; no hurry, no trepidation, no tumult of grief, ever prevented her from seeing and doing what was calculated to alleviate the pain and wearisomeness of the sick bed. When you saw her thus employed, you would immediately say, that faith, hope, and charity were personified in *her*. A sister was the last for whom she had smoothed the pillow of death. There was not the same energy of character, as there were not the same health and strength in Mrs. Winchester as in Mrs. Bolton; but a person more mild, and gentle, and amiable could scarcely be; her habits were a combination of sanctity and benevolence, and every feature of her face was illumined by them as by a constant sunshine. When such a person had passed triumphantly all

the other trials of life, and had only to die, before her pure soul could be translated into the realms of blissful spirits, we that are far inferior may still imagine, perhaps, how a sister Christian would feel and act, who was firm in faith, elevated by hope, and instinct with charity. In her attendance upon these scenes, it appeared to me that Mrs. Bolton was perpetually studying her own part, and gathering knowledge how to shut it up well; nothing doubting but that by the divine mercy in Christ, they should all meet again in some of the many mansions of their heavenly Father's house. But she wished these scenes to be an improvement to others as well as to herself; and, therefore, when her servants were assembled about her at family-prayers, after a domestic loss, she read an address to them composed for the purpose, the topics of which had been previously arranged in a consultation with *me*. I was amazed at the strength and fortitude of mind which such an undertaking required; none of her auditors, I am sure, ever went away with a dry eye. Happy would it be for us all to lay up such a fund for old age as Mrs. Bolton had!

In giving me the account of herself, which she had just done, she was affected twice or thrice so much as to be compelled to pause, and she affected *me* deeply at the same moments. When she stopped entirely, I recollect that she had

said nothing about the last point, which I had expressly mentioned, as one of the great solaces of age ; so I reminded her of it thus. “ I thank you, dear Mrs. Bolton, a thousand times ; *I* shall be improved by *you* out of the pulpit, more than *you* will be improved by *me* in it. Trust me, I have no intention of flattering ; *your* experience is better than all my finest theories. But one thing you have omitted. Health and reliance upon Providence naturally produce cheerfulness ; but still time may hang heavy on our hands, if we have only few resources ; and again, if the resources be bad ones, this would make the matter worse in the end, when we came to review our lives. Now I know very well that you have many resources, and good ones too ; but if you have no objection to tell me, I long to hear, whether you never fall into such tedious vacancies as to sigh after cards, and assemblies, and plays, and operas ? ”

She laughed aloud at this, and exclaimed, “ This is an insidious question, Dr. Warton ; you want to entrap me into a censure of the pleasures of the gay world. But I do not presume to censure them by any means ; I only say that they are not necessary to *my* happiness, or to fill up *my* time. If an old woman were deaf, and could not converse, or had bad eyes, and could not amuse or inform herself with books ; I think

it would be over-cruel to refuse her a little cribbage or quadrille, now and then, to pass a forlorn hour or two; I would not scruple to make one of a party with her myself. Charity seems to require it of us. But as for those who are always occupied in such amusements, and cannot exist without them, I neither commend nor condemn them; I only pity them for having involved themselves in such a habit. If they did this when they were young, it is not likely that they should be able to break through it when they are old. We must not judge them with severity, Dr. Warton. I fear my conversation is not always a bit better employment of my time."

"With respect to conversation," I said, "in the common intercourse of society, we cannot help ourselves. The thing to do, as far as possible, is to have no familiar acquaintance but with good people; having made such a provision as this we can do no more; and, if the conversation of good people is not always instructive, at least there will be nothing positively wrong in it. We put ourselves in the way of good, and there is no danger of anything bad." "Yes, Dr. Warton," she replied, "but the case is, that few persons are in such circumstances as to permit them to make an entire selection of associates. There are relations and other connexions, who must not be neglected, but who may be of any character; and,

for what I know, it might be better to set them down to cards, than to hear them talk." "That is true," I said, laughing, "and it cannot be helped. If we could engage them in conversation useful to themselves, *that* would be well indeed. But this does not apply to *you*, Mrs. Bolton. In this very particular you are an object of envy, that the persons who chiefly frequent your house are, some of them, eminent for rank and talent, some for the acquirements of science, and all for the most excellent principles and the most correct manners. I meet here churchmen and lawyers of the very highest stations, as well as others whom it is an honour to know. Such men, generally, when they are unbending and relaxing themselves, are not only delighting but improving *us*. Their visits are honourable to *you*, my dear Madam, and they are honourable to themselves too. When you were all young together, you lived together; they do not desert you now. When your age makes it inconvenient to *you* to visit *them*, as in former times, they still continue to visit their old friend. Your years are not a neglected solitude. This is mutually creditable; for I much question whether they would come here to play at whist with *you*, or with one another. No, no, my dear Madam; if you had been a card-player all your life, and given up to dissipation and frivolity, you might now have been

solitary enough, I expect, so far as those eminent persons are concerned. If we love cards, what matters it with whom we play? At any rate conversation is better in principle than cards; conversation *may* add to our knowledge and wisdom; cards cannot. The habit of card-playing always lowers the mind, never raises it. I conclude, therefore, my dear Mrs. Bolton, that you have the power of offering your visitors something better than cards, which attracts them here. At least I never saw you offer cards to anybody; you never offered them to *me*."

She was touched with several things which I had said, and which were perfectly true. Old age itself is not insensible to praise. Mrs. Bolton would have been offended with mere flattery; but no doubt, she was secretly gratified, that her system of life and excellence of character were appreciated, as they ought to be, and preserved for her the regard and esteem of some of the worthiest persons of the community. My last expression she caught up eagerly, and exclaimed, "To *you*, Dr. Warton? I never offered cards to any clergyman; but if I had, I should not have offered them to *you*, assuredly. Upon that point I am quite clear. The clergy ought not to meddle with cards, whoever else may do it. They should mix with us as much as possible, but with no loss of dignity; they should condescend, but something

sacred should still be uppermost; they should be mild and gentle with us all, but not sacrifice a particle of their authority. A card-table and a pulpit, my dear Sir, will never agree together. I could not listen as I ought to do on a Sunday, to one with whom I had played at cribbage on Saturday. The more grave he might be in the pulpit, the more I should think of the card-table, and be led to forget something of the sacred authority and dignity which belong to his office. I should fear that even the awful truths, which he might utter there, would come to us diminished in weight and power."

Never before did I hear Mrs. Bolton say anything half so strong as this; at first I thought it not consistent with the usual lenity and moderation of her opinions; but when I considered how deeply-rooted religion was in her affections and habits, and how much the uniform abstinence from secular pleasures exalted and ennobled the clerical character in the eyes of the laity, and threw around religion itself an additional awe and veneration, I secretly applauded her so much the more, and I said to myself, what would she think of dancing, of shooting, of fox-hunting? I hope my younger brethren will ponder this in their serious thoughts. There are not many Mrs. Boltons in the world, but there are many shrewd people, without piety, who will never become pious

whilst they observe *us* as much devoted to worldly pleasure as themselves. If the influence of religion does not hallow its own ministers, they will say, it is but the shadow of a shade. This deserves all our attention ; yet we must beware of the other extreme. The aspect of religion in its ministers must not forbid, but invite ; it must be sanctimonious without gloom, and cheerful without levity.

After a short pause, “ I will tell you a story,” I said, “ which will show you, that you are not the first lady of honoured years, who has made to *me* personally the same observation upon clerical card-playing. I am not sure, indeed, that the observation was applied by the good lady to whom I allude, who lived in my former parish, and was ten years older than yourself, to all clergymen generally ; but she would not suffer *me* to play at cards at any rate, or tolerate cards in my house, although to her own cost ; for she loved cards exceedingly herself, being very deaf, and her eyesight so impaired as to make her unable to read a book by candle-light. Under such circumstances I thought cards so reasonable an amusement for her, and I esteemed her besides so much for many valuable qualities, that I determined, when she first dined with me, not only to let her have her rubber at whist, but also to play with her myself. Judge then of my utter astonishment, when I informed her of my arrange-

ments and intentions, at the moment for carrying them into effect, and she replied in an instant, firmly and decisively, ‘ Dr. Warton, you cannot like cards I am quite certain, they are infinitely below your character; I should be sorry to see them in your house even; I never will be concerned in permitting you to lower yourself out of good nature to *me*.’ ‘ O pardon me, Mrs. Dormer,’ I said, ‘ such a thing will be creditable to me. Everybody will understand it at once.’ ‘ Nobody will understand it,’ she replied, with quickness; ‘ nobody stops to find differences and make allowances. It will be all over the parish to-morrow, and I shall be accused of corrupting you.’ ”

Mrs. Bolton was highly entertained with this anecdote of Mrs. Dormer, and after having made several inquiries about her, which I answered minutely, she proposed to stroll in the garden, and to show the children some of the rare and curious plants which were cultivated there, as she understood that they were just beginning to learn botany. “ They will be delighted,” I said; “ but you have attached them to you already in an extraordinary manner. I will give you a proof of it. The game which we sent you in the winter did not come from *me* or Mrs. Warton; it was a present from our eldest boy. It had come to him from one of his godfathers, and when his mamma

asked him what he would do with it, he answered immediately, ‘I will give it to Mrs. Bolton;’ ‘But then,’ she asked again, ‘how will you like to go without your roasted partridges for dinner?’ ‘Never mind,’ he replied, without hesitation, ‘I shall have more pleasure in doing *the civil thing* to Mrs. Bolton.’ So you see, my dear Madam, you have won *this* little boy’s heart at least; but they all love you alike.” Every amiable action in another always came home to the feelings of Mrs. Bolton, whether she was personally interested in it or not; now she had a tear in her eye, as I perceived on looking towards her, when I spoke the last sentence. However, she said, “It is your mode of bringing them up, Dr. Warton. Children do not naturally love old women, or old men either.” “No,” I replied, “I believe not, in general. The old are often cross-tempered, disturbed with little things, cannot endure noise, are too much occupied with their own infirmities to attend to children, or have nothing agreeable to say to them; so, having few points of contact, they repel rather than attract. But where the contrary is the case, as it is sometimes, *my* children at least are attracted by old age in an uncommon degree. They love all who are kind to them in any way; but kind actions, and still more, a kind manner in old people, seem to engage their artless affections wonderfully. I will tell you a

reinarkable instance of it. When our invaluable friend, Mr. Musgrave, whom you knew so well, whose whole life, as you also know, was a life of beneficence, whose very happiness consisted in making others happy, was lying upon his death-bed, sinking away gradually in lethargic slumbers, Mrs. Warton brought me a little boy ; and the children having been desired to find a name for him, they fixed unanimously upon that of Mr. Musgrave, although by no means a pretty one. It was a token of regard perfectly disinterested ; they had no reason to think that even the fact could by any possibility become known to Mr. Musgrave himself. However, it did. In a short interval of reason before the very last slumber, when he seemed disposed to listen to anything that might appear of sufficient interest respecting his friends, this was communicated to him, by one who sat watching at his bedside, and was the dearest to him upon earth. It affected and pleased him, even on the awful verge of eternity ; his lip quivered ; he even smiled and spoke something, but not clearly intelligible ; he was beyond a tear." The whole weight of my own loss in this excellent old man now pressed upon my memory, and for a few minutes neither Mrs. Bolton nor myself made a single observation. But at length she got up, and equipped herself for a walk, with a cloke, bonnet, and clogs. " It is of

no use," I said, when we were now in the garden; "to offer you my arm; you always reject it." "I should only incommod you," she replied. "Thank God! I want no assistance yet; and you might wish to run about with the children, from border to border, where there is anything pretty to be seen." In fact, Mrs. Bolton never leaned upon anybody's arm, except, perhaps, of some youthful relation whom she tenderly loved; and then from affection, and not for help. Even eighty years were no burden to her.

§ II. THE SAME, AND THE CHILDREN.

The merry voices of the children soon directed us to the spot where they were assembled. No wonder that it charmed and detained them! Such a knot of plants in full flower, of all hues, was scarcely ever seen grouped together with so much taste and beautiful disorder, except in the unsubstantial imagination of the poet. There were azaleas of every colour, some of them fragrant too, like the honeysuckle, and andromedas, and daphnes, and kalmias, and ledums, and magnolias, and rhododendrons in rich profusion, and many more, whose names are not at this moment in my recollection. Here was a constant source of de-

lightful relaxation, and a sweet solace for age. The whole garden indeed was a feast for florists and botanists. Here you might see some of the rarest trees, of extraordinary growth for their nature, still in vigour and perfection ; here others, venerable in their decaying grandeur, with their mighty arms fastened to each other with rods and chains of iron, and every hollow in their trunks that might admit of putrifying moisture, securely closed with plates or plugs of lead. Above sixty years ago, when Mrs. Bolton's family first settled here, they began to plant, and all had lived to witness the success of the experiment ; but the chief management had devolved for a long time upon herself, and so strong was her constitution, that the tall, firm cedars alone seemed likely to survive her. At this instant she was very busy, and very happy, in making rich nosegays for every body, and one to be carried home to Mrs. Warton. I trembled for the fate of some of the most magnificent shrubs ; such immense branches, laden with full-blown flowers, did she tear off (for she seldom used a knife), without the slightest apparent reluctance or remorse, when, I must confess, I myself should have wanted courage, if they had been mine, to touch a leaflet. So I said ; but hear her reply, disclaiming all the merit of goodnature,—“ The more I gather, the more do they bloom, Dr. Warton.”

At length we moved away from this enchanting spot, and after visiting the conservatory, and being told unhesitatingly the name and country of everything which attracted our admiration, we came to an angle in which the chief gardener was planting a hickory, or some tree which required fifty summers and winters to bring it to the size which it usually attained in its native forests.

“ *Serit arborem, alteri quæ prosit sæculo,*”

I thought with myself, and admired the energy and disinterestedness of mind, which could provide for the innocent and rational enjoyment of future generations. It was a fine idea of some heathen of antiquity, who, being asked for whom he was planting trees in his old age, when he was himself on the verge of life, answered emphatically, that he was doing it for the immortal gods; as if the gods, who lived for ever, (so I should suppose he meant) would have the earth, which was their own creation, incessantly cultivated, and adorned with every beautiful vegetable production, not for a single generation, but for all to the end of time. I mentioned this to Mrs. Bolton. “ Yes,” she said, “ certainly; but besides *that*, we ought alway to leave things as we find them. When I came into possession of this garden, it had a peculiar character of its own; it would be shameful to suffer its character to be lost from indolence or niggardliness. Why, it is true, it will matter not

a tittle to *me*, what becomes of it after I am gone ; but having enjoyed it myself so long, it would be disgraceful to deprive those who come after me of a similar enjoyment. Indeed I should cease to enjoy it, if I saw it falling into ruin. You see, Dr. Warton, what havoc antiquity threatens to make shortly amongst these noble trees ; I must provide against it to the best of my power, by planting fresh ones to be ready to succeed, without any foolish expectation of profiting myself. I am not so sanguine as to think for an instant that I shall ever sit and gossip under the shade of *this tree*," she concluded, laughing.

" Well," I said, " your successors will, and they will thank you. I myself already sit under a tree which you gave me, and gossip too. I admire your principle. It is painful to me to see old persons, as I do many, who go plodding on with over-anxiety for the things of this life, and clinging tenaciously to them, without any apparent care for the next. They seem as if they really fancied that they should live here for ever. On the other hand, however, it is a pleasing spectacle to observe much of the vigour and elasticity of youth still animating the old in all their proceedings, when I know at the same time that the one needful thing holds the highest place in their minds and hearts. I had a remarkable instance of this the other day. You remember my mulberry-tree, which came

from a simple branch, lopped and stuck in the ground without any care or skill, and in the third year produced me fruit. Well, an old clergyman, at the prodigious age of ninety-five years, actually wrote to me to learn accurately the process by which I had succeeded in my experiment, intending to try it himself. I have no doubt, he fully expects to eat mulberries gathered from a tree to be planted at ninety-five. This beats even old Cato Major, who began to learn Greek at eighty. Yet, I am sure he is perfectly prepared to go, and leave all behind him, without a single pang, whenever God may call him. But it shews a cheerful temper and a flow of spirits which are wonderful and delightful. His good hopes in the next world are the solid basis of his happiness here, and he will live to the latest moment, enjoying tranquilly and gratefully the gifts of Providence."

"Yes, my dear Sir," she said, gravely, "if it please the same Providence to continue to him the blessings of health and understanding; but a body in ruins, and still more a noble mind, are a melancholy sight, and this is most often the last act of the piece. To survive one's health and one's understanding is a sad prospect, and might tempt one to wish for an earlier death. But God's will be done. I give up my own, and repose on *him*."

As she said this, she had turned into a close

alley, where I followed her, the children remaining behind to see the earth thrown in about the roots of the new tree; so we were alone again. She was visibly affected,—not, I think, so much for herself, because it was not her temper to anticipate evils, or to be afflicted with the imagination of what might never come,—but the excellent old lady of noble rank, a good friend of Mrs. Bolton's, whom I have mentioned in another dialogue, was now precisely in that mournful condition which Mrs. Bolton had so feelingly described; her body indeed not so entirely broken by age, as her memory, once stored with anecdote and knowledge, was gone, and her whole mind a wreck. Just before this calamity occurred, we had been at her house together for a private administration of the Sacrament; and I myself had seen her twice or thrice since, and was agreeably struck with observing that her faculties, dead to all the powers of reasoning and recollection, were still alive to a sense of religion.

Being soon by Mrs. Bolton's side, in the alley, I said, “*That* is the true Christian disposition, my dear Madam, to have faith in God, and to cast all our care upon *him*, being fully assured, as we are, that *he* careth for *us*. You are thinking of our poor neighbour; undoubtedly, she is a spectacle of sorrow to all who have known her as long or as well as we have; the contrast between what she was, and

what she is, is painful for friends to reflect upon ; but you will be pleased with being told, as I was with discovering, even so late as this very morning, that she has not yet lost her capacity or relish for sacred reading and prayer." " How is *that*, Dr. Warton ?" Mrs. Bolton, eagerly enquired. " After some other questions," I said, " chiefly about her health, I asked her, if she could amuse herself with a book ; upon which, without answering me verbally (for her feeling seemed to deny her the power of speech at that moment), she reached from behind a cushion, on the sofa where she was sitting, *your own book*, my dear Mrs. Bolton ; and then she clasped it fervently with both her hands, as if it were her only, or her greatest comfort in this time of affliction."

Mrs. Bolton was now more affected than before, and I saw a tear in her eye ; for the consciousness that she had done good, by editing such a book, was added to the other causes which kindled a spark of lively interest in so warm a heart. This book of holy meditations, principally from Scripture, had been the favourite of Mrs. Bolton's youth, and long out of print, displaced by newer ones not half so excellent. At the expense of nearly one hundred pounds she had lately reprinted it, with a preface of her own, revised for her by an eminent prelate, and she had presented a copy to all her friends and intimate acquaintance, which they valued as a memorial of her piety and

numerous virtues. At length she said, with the tone of one sincerely grateful, "I thank God, Dr. Warton, for having been so gracious to me, as to make me useful in this manner to a single person, and especially to a person whom I have always esteemed so much. It is very gracious of him too, to preserve to *her* her religious sense, when she has lost almost every other. In truth, if we enter into a comparison, we want no other at the approach of death. But I fear, Dr. Warton, this will follow the rest before she dies."

"It is most likely," I replied; "and it seems a piteous case enough; but we agree to trust in God. If a person knew beforehand, especially a person of great intellectual powers, that he should become, like Swift, a driveller or an idiot, it would be a terrible affliction to him, no doubt; and he *might* know it beforehand, by being conscious of a gradual diminution of those powers. If he became so all at once, being unconscious of his own condition, and of the approach of it, it would give him no personal trouble. The other, therefore, is the case that deserves consideration, and it is explained at once, if you suppose the same person to have used his faculties proudly, and to have been elated with a presumptuous confidence in his own mental strength. It might be well for such a person to know, and for others too, by his awful example, that God gives every talent of his own free will, and can take it away again, whenever it

may please him to do so, or when he sees the talent abused to the destruction of the man himself. If, on the contrary, the great faculties of mind have been applied only in the service of the giver, (we will suppose such a case, whether it ever happen, or not,) still it may be fit for God to take them away, not for the improvement of *him* from whom they are taken, but for the improvement of those to whom the person might become the most striking proof of the vanity of the very noblest distinction upon earth. And if he himself suffers by such a dispensation here, there is no difficulty in *that*; because the author of the dispensation has infinite rewards at his disposal, and can recompense the sufferer tenfold hereafter. Thus to my own mind do I justify the doings of the Almighty."

"His will be done!" she said, fervently, at the same time clasping her hands, and looking upwards for an instant towards his habitation, "His will be done!" she repeated, with equal emphasis. "According to the Psalmist, Dr. Warton, he is always clear when he is judged." "Yes," I replied; "and he seems often to wish *us* to judge him. He seems often to submit himself to the bar of human reason, and to challenge us to pronounce our sentence upon his dispensations; and, whenever we are able to fathom them, or even to catch a partial glimpse of them, our sentence ab-

solves him ; we *clear* him from all injustice, and acknowledge the predominance of mercy. But many of his ways are unsearchable, and past finding out. And is not this very probable, when we consider the distance between a finite intelligence and an infinite providence ? Why should it startle us then ? If he were always shrouded in clouds and thick darkness,—if he never broke upon us in all the effulgence of heavenly light, or shewed us only the skirts of his glory,—we might sit in dumb, fearful expectation of his doings, which we could not resist, or by our murmurs might provoke a heavier judgment. But seeing and understanding so much as we do, we may well submit where we cannot investigate ; we may well believe and trust, even when we are unable to see or understand. And of one great general principle we are sure, that all things work together for the good of those who *do* believe and trust in him.”

Mrs. Bolton now appeared to be wrapped up in deep reflection, and would, no doubt, have continued to converse upon so important a topic, if I had not suggested another more immediately applicable to herself, and one upon which I was anxious to learn her sentiments. “ How is this, my dear Madam ? ” I asked, “ do faith and trust in God increase, when the probability of quitting this world comes closer and closer upon us ? I often meet with aged persons who desire to be released ;

but I have generally thought, that their infirmities and troubles created the desire, and no clearer prospect of future happiness to which they might suppose themselves to be going. Others again have such faint views of the next world that, with all their infirmities and troubles, they would rather remain here. When I once said, good-naturedly, to Mrs. Dormer, 'I hope to see you for many years longer,' she burst into tears, and replied, 'If you wished me well, Dr. Warton, you would wish very differently.' There might have been a mixture of feelings here; the great inconvenience of growing infirmities, and the deferring of her reward: that she had no fears of futurity was evident."

"All fear of futurity," Mrs. Bolton answered, whilst her eyes sparkled, "may unquestionably be overcome, but not without a firm faith and trust in God's covenant through Jesus Christ. None, probably, who know what his holy law requires, would venture to stand upon their own merits, but on *his* they may. And it is to be hoped, that some persons have had this faith and trust in full perfection during their whole lives, and consequently, having been always convinced of God's mercy towards them, were never tormented with painful fears at all; and the same persons, no doubt, might have hailed the approach of their latter end with a certain degree of joy, although their duty would have taught them to wait with

patience for their appointed time. The anticipation of unchequered happiness, and the delightful thought of rejoicing our dear friends, might well make us all even to long for our great change, when it cannot be far off, and the chief purposes of our existence have been fulfilled. But the constant dwelling upon these ideas, Dr. Warton, tends, I believe, to increase our confidence, that God will certainly accomplish his ultimate promises; and at any rate a reflecting person, in the course of a long life, has seen God's goodness in so many instances, that his faith and trust in it must needs be greatly augmented towards the end. It would be difficult, my dear Sir, to persuade *us* old people, that God will desert us at last after having blessed and supported us so long. I wish to speak humbly, as I think humbly, of myself; but I will tell *you*, my dear Sir, without scruple or affectation; the Gospel being my pole-star, I have very comfortable hopes of the next world, and they grow stronger and stronger every day."

The intuitions of the good, after the experience of years, are more satisfactory than the very demonstrations of the ablest of men. I listened to Mrs. Bolton, as to one who stood on the confines of Heaven, and already caught the delicious breeze wafting therefrom, and was thus infallibly assured of its existence and its bliss. I was absorbed in this contemplation, yet I should have made some reply,

if the children had not overtaken us at this very moment, and asked her to shew them the mistletoe, of which they had heard, growing upon some apple-trees in the kitchen-garden. Thither then she immediately conducted us; and, one of the party having stated the supposition, that the mistletoe had been grafted upon the apple-tree, she inquired if they knew how. "Yes," they answered, "by the gardener, to be sure." "Not by such a gardener as you are thinking of," she said, smiling; "but probably by one, and a biped too, but winged besides, that once lived in this garden. Did you ever hear of the mistle-thrush?" "Yes," they replied, "but they did not know the reason of the name." "The mistle-thrush," she said, "delights to feed upon the berries of the mistletoe; the seeds within the berries are clammy, and stick to her beak; she rubs her beak against the bark of trees to get them off; and when the seeds fall into a nice snug little hole, in the bark of a tree proper for the purpose, there they grow, and produce a little shrub like that which you now see."

The children being surprised and pleased by this curious theory, I said, "Mrs. Bolton's story is very pretty, and very likely to be true too; and numerous are the contrivances of nature for scattering seeds about the earth, until they meet with the soil which is suited to their growth. Many, without doubt, are carried from place to place by

birds, to the roofs of houses, and the ledges of high rocks; but great multitudes of them have little wings of their own, with which they fly here and there without the help of birds. I have often shewn you the fringe or feathery down which is attached to them, of a most delicate and beautiful substance; when they drop from their seed-vessels, every little breath of air whirls them about, by means of those minute sails, into new situations; and up they spring to our wonder, where our hands have not sown them."

" But," said one of the children, " the seed of the misseltoe, when it fell into the hole in the bark of this apple-tree, must have found a little earth to make it sprout, and to fix its roots in, and to draw up nourishment from it. Where did the earth come from?" " I am not sure that it required any earth," she answered, with the greatest good humour; " some seeds will sprout without any, and the misseltoe is a parasitical plant; that is, it draws its nourishment from the tree in which the thrush leaves the seed, the apple-tree or the oak; *that* is its nature, as God appointed it; but it might, perhaps, have required a little earth at the first, until it was completely joined with this apple-tree; so I will show you where the earth might have come from. Do you see this dry, powdery, withered-like crust all over the bark, brown, yellow, black, and of almost every colour?

This is a plant itself, and all vegetation begins with it, I believe. It is called a lichen; it has seeds of its own, which are so wonderfully small, that they probably are always floating in the air without our seeing them; and wherever they attach themselves, even if it be to a wall, there they continue to live in this dead-looking state, and spread wider and wider every year, some withering and others flourishing, without end. But I will take you to an old wall, and then you will understand the thing better."

Immediately she did this, and shewed them first, the most obscure lichen, which could scarcely be distinguished from the wall itself; then another with more substance about it, in fact, a mass of lichens, in a state of decay, on the edge of which a more important plant, one of the mosses, but very minute, had begun to vegetate. "Here," she said, "you may see how nature proceeds. These decaying lichens make a little soil, which is sufficient to support the mosses; the decaying mosses make more soil, and then we have a superior order of plants, though still very small; and these decaying in their turns, at last, by a gradual succession, there is soil enough for large ones. Here is the little *draba verna*, the harbinger of spring, long ago in seed; there the *saxifraga tridactylites*, also in seed; yonder is an *arenaria*, and a *cerastium*; and on the top, and

in the junctures of the bricks, where the soil can best accumulate, are the great snapdragon and the wall-flower in full bloom. So you see that what appears to be one of the lowest of God's works is a great agent in his scheme of vegetation. The apple-tree was almost covered with it, and in some places was beginning to be mossy too. You will, therefore, have no difficulty now in finding soil enough in the little holes, bored, perhaps, by the woodpecker, to make a good vegetable bed for a misseltoe-seed brought by a thrush."

Nothing could be more agreeable than Mrs. Bolton's manner of talking upon subjects of natural history, with which she had a very extensive acquaintance, acquired by much reading and observation, and perpetually increased or renewed by valuable periodical publications. If she had lived always in the depths of the country, her place would have been another Selborne, and she herself another White. Her horticultural renown had gained her a prize from the Society, and the honour of calling an apple by her name. The children listened to her with faces of delight and attention; so I resolved to endeavour to draw her out for our mutual entertainment and instruction. "What numbers," I said, "of surprising and amusing facts have been collected together by Ray and Derham, and by later naturalists, such as Kirby and Spence, which really overpower and

overwhelm the mind, when we attempt to raise it to a conception of the divine Creator ! The variety of his works is prodigious and endless. It is truth, and no figure, that his wisdom, seen in his works, is infinite." " Yes, my dear sir," she replied, " and what is most astonishing is, that he seems to have bestowed the same care, the same pains (if I may use such an expression of one who does everything by a single effort of his will), upon the minutest as upon the greatest of his works. Why, even in the formation of this petty moss there is a wonderful instance of his workmanship, and much more than we yet understand. But in the insects, the plan, the contrivance, the finishing (with respect to certain ends, when we know them) is absolutely perfect and complete—yes, just as much so as in ourselves, who boast to be at the head of the visible creation. The hand of man, always cited as the most wonderful of things, is not a whit more wonderful than the wings, the legs, and the feelers of the meanest insect. Infinite skill shines conspicuous and alike in both. Think now, if men had been the makers of insects (which I assume for the sake of marking the difference), what a long succession of ages and generations must have passed before they could have had intellect enough to devise, and instruments of sufficient fineness and delicacy to cut, to saw, to

weave, to knit, to plane, to polish, to paint—in one word, to make an insect's wing ! But God devised and made an endless diversity of parts and members in different creatures, all as difficult as a wing, all at once, all by one volition.—Every volition of his is wisdom and power."

" Yes," I said, " there you solve the problem. Grant omniscience and omnipotence, and you strike off at a single blow a world, a whole world, like this which we inhabit, with all the various creatures that fill and adorn it." " So it is, Dr. Warton," she replied ; " but there is another thing still more affecting our minds in God's works, and as well worthy of *your* consideration, my young friends," she said to the children ; " and that is, the marks of his goodness, which the most cursory observer cannot but see in them. I do not mean such goodness as shews itself in supplying every creature with what the creature wants, but something over and above ; something for the mere enjoyment of the creature itself, or of others. Perhaps, indeed, if we were perfectly acquainted with every thing, what I call provisions for mere enjoyment to the different creatures, might turn out to be indispensable for their uses or necessities ; but, at any rate, they are the never-failing sources of enjoyment to ourselves, without any appearance of being necessary and indispensable to us. As one instance out of many, I will

mention the rich and brilliant colours of insects. If these colours are either useful or necessary to the insects themselves, I am sure I do not know in what way ; but I am equally sure that they occasion great delight to *us*. What beauty, what cheerfulness, do they add to the face of the creation, when we see those insects, and birds besides, glittering in the sun,

‘ In all the liveries deck’d of summer’s pride,
‘ With spots of gold and purple, azure and green ! ’ ’

“ It is very true, my dear madam,” I said :— “ we cannot open our eyes without seeing tokens of divine goodness all around us. With respect to colours, if they are useful in flowers to attract insects to their food, whilst the same insects are necessary to help the flowers to disperse the elements of their seeds ; if the colours of insects are useful in enabling birds to detect them as they lurk amongst the leaves of plants ; yet this seems little in comparison with the pleasure indulged to man ; and if God accomplishes many objects by the same contrivances, this should enlarge our ideas of his wisdom and power, without lessening the sense of his goodness to ourselves. It makes him the more adorable.”

“ No doubt of it,” she replied ; “ but in speaking of insects helping the flowers to impregnate their seeds, (which is so wonderful in the date-palm,) you remind me of an apparent anomaly,

which has often engaged my thoughts; and which nobody, I believe, has ever attempted to explain. Some flowers, the moment that they are punctured by insects, close upon them, and occasion them a very painful death, in lingering agonies, as is evident to the observer. Now this seems a gratuitous cruelty, unless, indeed; the death of the insect be advantageous in any way to the better fecundation of the plant. The touch of the insect may be necessary to set the elastic parts of the flower in motion; but why should it die, and especially in pain? The reason is inscrutable; but I conclude, from analogy, that there is a good reason nevertheless. Reach me that snapdragon, Dr. Warton, and I will show the children a very curious contrivance, which does not terminate so fatally." When I had done this, she pointed out to them how the mouth of the flower was constructed. "An insect may enter," she said, "because the passage is so formed as readily to give way to one entering; but to return by the same passage is impossible, on account of these bristles, which block it up with a sort of *chevaux de frize*." She then opened the flower, and we saw several little ants at the bottom of the tube, revelling in the delicious honey which was lodged there, and totally unaware that they were prisoners. "Must they not have died here?" some one exclaimed. "No," she said:—"when they

had devoured all the honey, and were beginning to be pinched with hunger, they would have eaten their way out at the bottom of the tube, and so made their escape. If your papa will give me a riper flower, I will show you that this has been done." Accordingly, the little holes having been shown to them in another snapdragon, through which the ants had recently escaped, I asked Mrs. Bolton, if she had any theory to explain these singular appearances — " it being very improbable," I said, " that so much artifice should be wasted in vain."

" I have nothing satisfactory to tell you," she replied. " It is an obvious conjecture, that the presence and detention of the insect in the tube for a certain time, are necessary to the most important function of the plant; and therefore his entrance is facilitated, and his food is furnished for him during that time; but his return is obstructed, till hunger compels him to gnaw through his prison walls, which does not happen, we may presume, before his work is done. But what a meagre theory is this, Dr. Warton? — In truth, what we know of nature is astonishingly little after all. The mass of facts that has been gathered, immense as it is, is nothing in comparison with the sum total of facts not yet discovered; and the greater part of those which have been noticed, are still unexplained. Mystery

attaches to some part or other of everything. If you were to ask your atheist friend, whose history you once told me, how it is that a nettle stings, he would probably ridicule such a question at the first, and be astonished afterwards to learn, that at the bottom of every spine is a little bag of venomous liquor, which bursts upon being handled, and discharges its contents into the puncture which the spine has made in our fingers, and occasions the inflammation and the pain.—Well, but he did not know, besides, that the nettle was, of all herbs, the most luxurious repast to a particular species of caterpillar; what then would he say to this strange circumstance, that at the bottom of each bristle of the same caterpillar is a similar bag to that in the nettle! This is no random coincidence, Dr. Warton; but ages will probably elapse before the connexion of the two, and the meaning of the wise Architect, are detected by naturalists. At present, we cannot approach towards a solution of it—we cannot make even a rational guess about it; and it is the same with infinite multitudes of the Creator's works. Yet," she concluded, with her significant look, "we, clever creatures, forsooth, expect all to be simple and clear in revelation. The book of nature and of revelation have the same Author; but we expect all the obscurity to be confined to the book of nature."

Upon this I smiled and said, "Yes, my dear madam, we are never content, unless we can model things after our own fashion. If the whole Bible were unintelligible or obscure, we might well complain, because, at any rate, we must be governed by it; but, as all that is necessary for our government is plain enough, why should we require more? We are naturally, indeed, inquisitive into everything, and desirous of knowing everything. There is no harm in this; but it does not follow that we have reason for complaint, if we cannot comprehend everything. Why, indeed, should we suppose it likely, that everything revealed would be within the grasp of our intellect?—On the very contrary, does not the likelihood fall the other way; namely, that as we see God but obscurely in some of his works, so also we should see him but obscurely in some of his revelations? Well, but then comes the question—which overweening persons think, or pretend to think, unanswerable—why reveal what is not to be understood? In the works of nature it matters not, essentially at least, whether we understand or not; things are created for their uses, and not for the purpose of our understanding them; but a revelation is for the sole purpose of making things known, and yet we do not, and cannot, know them after all. This is absurd and incredible, they say."

“ Yes, Dr. Warton,” interposed Mrs. Bolton, with vivacity; “ but they forget, or rather it does not suit them to allow, that God intends to exercise, not our understanding only, but our faith also, in what he reveals; and in some things our faith alone. A resurrection, for instance, is revealed; we understand nothing whatever about it; probably we cannot with our present faculties; we can only believe it. But if we understood ever so much about it, still the main thing, the fact itself, would be left entirely for our belief; and the strength or weakness of our belief in the fact would furnish us with stronger or weaker motives to holiness. This belief is everything. There seems, indeed, to be no better way of trying us, whether we will trust in God’s declarations, and act upon them, or not—than by informing us of certain facts, but not explaining them so as to give us perfect knowledge. Will any one argue, that God should not have acquainted us with the fact of a resurrection, because he could not, or did not think it proper to acquaint us with the mode in which so stupendous a work will be performed? God created man; surely they would not have the knowledge of this fact withheld from us, because we cannot understand how God did it, or because God does not choose to tell us how he did it. It is nearly the same, I think, with other most important doctrines of Scripture—the Trinity in

Unity, the Atonement, the operations of the Spirit, and the general Judgment. The facts are necessary to be revealed, for the sake of our believing them."

" You are very right, my dear madam," I said, admiring her sound distinction, as it appeared to me; " but perhaps, the reasons for revealing the Trinity in Unity are not so obvious as in the case of the others. All must allow the propriety of revealing to us, if they be true, such doctrines as those of the Creation, the Atonement, the operations of the Spirit, the Resurrection, and the general Judgment; because they *must* see, if they do not wilfully shut their eyes, the use of our knowing the mere facts without knowing anything more about them. But the fact of a Trinity in Unity, whilst the thing itself is so entirely above our reason, or, as the gainsayer affirms, contradictory to it, does not appear, upon the surface at least, to be so directly useful for us to know. And perhaps it is not; so that we are rather left to collect it from Scripture by just inference for ourselves, than enabled to find it there clearly and positively revealed. But then, if you analyse this doctrine, there are component parts which are infinitely useful, and therefore exceedingly proper for us to know; and accordingly those parts are also clearly and positively revealed; I mean especially the divinity of the Son, and the eternity, as

well as omniscience and other divine attributes, of the Spirit, which make *him* to be God too. Now then, having thus ascertained what seems essential for us to know, that each of the three Persons has all the powers of the Godhead, to give us a perfect satisfaction there remains one thing more for us to be assured of, namely, that these powers will always be exercised in concurrence, and not in opposition with each other. And how do we get this assurance? Why, by being told the fact, that there is but one God; so that all their powers are only the same power. This is the practical use of our knowing the fact of a Unity in the Trinity; not so obvious, you perceive, but still necessary for the full assurance of faith."

Mrs. Bolton had scarcely time to express her opinion of my statement, when a servant informed her that an old man of the name of Heyden was very desirous of speaking with her. "Did he mention his business?" she asked. "No, Madam," was the answer; "but I think it is to beg something of you; for I know that he has been for a long while in distress." "Let him be ready for me in the housekeeper's room," she said; and then she enquired of *me* if I knew him. "Yes, very well," I replied; "and I am quite sure that he will interest you in his favour. He once belonged to the Black Prussian Hussars, and fought at the battle of Minden." "Well, you must go

with me to speak to him," she said; "but first we must dispose of the children."

They had slunk away from us, one by one, when we began to discuss the knotty points of theology; but she soon espied them all assembled by the side of a large circular bed of roses, and she led the way towards them. "Do you know," she asked, when she came up to the delicious, fragrant spot (for the roses were beginning to bloom this year before the Americans had lost their beauty), "do you know that all these roses spring from one root?" "No," they answered, in surprise; "they seem to be all separate trees." "But they were not so always," she said. "Yonder rose in the centre, a little larger than many of the rest, is the parent of them all." "And how many are there?" they enquired eagerly. "Probably a hundred," she replied. "But how can it be?" they enquired again, doubtfully. "You shall see," she said; and then she showed them some branches of one of the trees depressed to the surface of the ground, and a part of each pegged down with a forked stick below it. In this situation she informed them that roots would be thrown out by the part under the soil, and that every branch would then become a tree of itself, and might be safely separated with a knife from the original stock. "So yonder," she said, laughing, "is the old mother, with a numerous progeny

of children in a circle all around her, and many larger than herself." Then turning to *me*, she expressed a doubt whether it might not have been better if the roses had been of different sorts: "but," she continued, "the effect seems to please every body more as it is, for the curiosity of the thing; and I have had great pleasure myself in superintending the process, and in watching the progress of a new season." "What a pity," I exclaimed to the children, "that the Corycian sage, so celebrated by Virgil in his Georgics, had not lived in these days! We would have made a match between *him* and Mrs. Bolton. He was famous for his management of roses; Mrs. Bolton only wants an equal poet to make *her* more famous still. Alfred," I said, patting him upon the shoulder, "you must attune your lyre, if nobody else is inspired to do it, and not suffer this rose-bed to go unsung. But at any rate, my dear Madam,"—thus I turned to Mrs. Bolton,—"the recreation of a garden is delightful, and full of ever-varying novelty; and what wonder that age should steal along sweetly and placidly in the cultivation of a little paradise?"

Her extreme good humour and cheerfulness put us all into high spirits. She was amused with the thought of setting Alfred to work to write a copy of Latin verses in honour of her garden; she liked the comparison of herself to the Corycian old

man ; and she laughed heartily at the ridiculous joke of becoming his bride ; but my concluding sentence brought a tear into her eye, because it reminded her of her blessings. The children however soon reanimated her with their enquiries about the trees. Here, as we passed on, was a lofty deciduous cypress, there a willow-leaved oak, a Byzantine hazel, and a copper-leaved beech ; here again the gingko and snowdrop trees ; there the sophora Japonica, which in my own garden was so diminutive as to be nailed against a wall, stood in antiquated state, like the venerable monarch of the wood. But we were now at the door ; so we bid them run about on the lawn, whilst we talked with the old hussar in the housekeeper's room.

He rose as we entered, tall and portly, and saluted us in the manner of a foreigner ; but he spoke English perfectly. She was struck with his figure, which betokened in declining years how wonderful must have been the strength and vigour of his manhood. "How old are you ?" she asked him. "I am near upon fourscore, Madam," he answered. "Why, then, I am older than you, Mr. Heyden," she said, cheerfully. "God bless you, Madam !" he replied, cordially, "and send you many years more." "Thank you, thank you," she said, "we must leave it to him. After eighty it is often nothing but labour and sorrow." "I

know it already, Madam," he answered, mournfully; "my eyes fail me now, and I cannot work as I did at my tailoring trade: and so, Madam, I am behindhand with my rent, and my landlord threatens to take my bed from under me." "I wish with all my heart," she said, "that your eyes were as good as mine, Mr. Heyden; but you have injured them, I fear, with sewing by candle-light." "Yes, Madam," he replied, still mournfully, "and they will never be again what they have been." "Come, come," she said, with animation, "cheer up, cheer up! you have a friend who will help you: your rent shall be paid. Dr. Warton tells me that you fought for this country in your younger days; we ought not to forget *that*. You left your own country, it seems, and settled here; trusting to the generosity of England. You ought not to be disappointed at such an age, when your conduct, as I judge, has been praiseworthy." The old man's countenance brightened up at this, and his tone became more firm, and he exclaimed with earnestness, "Aye, my good Madam, this is what they told me. They told me that you never refused any body who had a good reason for asking. Yes, Madam, I have lived in England these fifty years, and have maintained my family till now respectably, without troubling the parish-officers, or begging of any body; and I hope the kind people who have employed me have been satisfied

with my work. The Doctor here has tried to get a little pension for me from the Duke, in memory of Minden." "And sorry I am to tell you," I said, "my poor old friend, that there is no chance of success in that scheme. My answer from the Duke's secretary is, that your case does not come within any of the rules." "*That* is bad news, Sir," he replied, "but I must bear it patiently. It was too much for a stranger to expect." "But what do you owe for arrears of rent?" enquired Mrs. Bolton. "Ah, my good Madam," he answered with hesitation, "it is a large sum; it is too much to ask. I can satisfy my landlord perhaps with paying him a part down, and promising him the rest when times are a little better." "Well, but what is it?" she enquired again, expecting probably that it could not be less than twenty pounds, by the old man's delay in telling her. "It is three pounds and fifteen shillings," he said, with fear. "You shall pay it all at once and immediately," she exclaimed, with the greatest alacrity; "but it is of more consequence to consider what is to become of you afterwards. I will talk to Dr. Warton about it. Wait here a moment till you have received the money."

Thus we left him, invoking blessings upon Mrs. Bolton's head, and the tears running down his cheeks. When we came into her own room, she said, "Have you not often proved to me that it is

contrary to good policy to pay rents, Dr. Warton? but really, humanity must get the better of policy sometimes." "Nothing could be worse in point of policy," I replied, "than a general readiness to pay rents. I always find that, if I pay for one, it brings twenty new cases upon me very soon. It induces the people to be negligent in saving up the necessary sum, and it encourages the landlords to seize upon their little property: somebody will interpose, they think, and settle the matter in such an extremity. But when it is perfectly understood that nobody will interfere to pay arrears of rent, matters go on in their proper train; the tenant subtracts weekly from his wages, in the first instance, whatever he has agreed to pay, and the landlord does not wait beyond the fixed time for the payment; and this prevents a large debt from accumulating, which it would be absolute ruin for the tenant to discharge. This, then, should be the principle with respect to rent; especially as every body knows to a certainty beforehand that they will have rent to pay. But none know that a fever will attack them, or that they will break an arm, or that they will lose their work by the poverty or caprice of their masters. These, therefore, are the cases for a beneficial, discriminating humanity, in which policy always concurs. But simple, inconsiderate humanity is often mischievous to the persons who are relieved,

and generally to multitudes besides. This happens continually in many of our most usual charities, in more than is commonly imagined."

"But what is that, Dr. Warton," she replied, with her significant look, "which I always hear at the Sacrament? 'Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any poor man; and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from *thee*.'" "I can very well conceive," I said, "a state of society so ordered and regulated, that an undeviating obedience to this merciful command would be supremely right in every view, as it respects God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves. But ours is far, very far indeed, from such a state; and whatever satisfaction you might feel in your own mind from thinking that you have obeyed God and relieved a fellow-creature, and gratified yourself with pleasurable sensations, yet, if you reflected upon it, you would see that such a system, universally adopted, would inevitably produce idleness, mendicity, distress, and vice, enough to ruin the country. Still the command is a good one, nevertheless; but it must be construed, like all other Scripture-commands, in which it is impossible to state the limits and exceptions; and limits and exceptions there must be of necessity. The feeling of the heart should be 'never to turn our faces from any poor man'; but in the actual application, unless we enquire how he became

poor, we shall do mischief, nine times out of ten, in such a country as ours. Yet the command could not have been ‘never to turn our faces from any man who has been reduced to poverty by unavoidable misfortunes;’ this would have offered too great a latitude to the covetous and uncharitable, who are always ready enough to catch at every little twig to save themselves from giving their money. In short, it is wise to make the command general; it is thus a better trial of our disposition; but none are bound to execute it according to the letter, but only according to the spirit.”

Mrs. Bolton had the noble failing of an almost undistinguishing bounty; she gave indeed more or less, according to her view of the case; but she gave often where it would have been better to have withheld. I was glad, therefore, of so good an opportunity to state my sentiments at length. When I had finished, “Well, my dear Sir,” she said, laughing, “I believe I am deceived sometimes, often if you will; but it is better to be on the right side with respect to oneself. As to Heyden, you agree with me, no doubt, that it will be right in every way.” “Yes,” I replied, “his difficulties are occasioned by a providential affliction, and they are only temporary; that is, I think he will be able to go on, when you have paid his rent, if we help him afterwards with some of the

parish-charities. Otherwise, I should see no use in deferring a crisis which must inevitably come. If it were quite certain, I mean, that, in spite of your bounty, he must go to the poorhouse, I would advise you to retain it for a more successful operation."

"We are in a sad artificial state, my dear Sir," she said, rather sorrowfully; "what a pity that we cannot always follow the impulse of so divine a virtue as charity, without stopping to consider so many possible consequences and contingencies, and without the danger of offending against some great principle of moral or political economy!" "We are in continual danger of it if we follow the first impulse," I replied; "and it is a pity, certainly, because, on the other hand, the stopping to consider tends to harden the heart. Even in the case of sickness, when the father of a family can no longer work for its support, which is a case most deserving of compassion, we may do mischief. Often have I seen the ill effects, morally and politically, of the stream of bounty which has flowed in upon the sufferers. The sick man, obtaining more by his sickness than he could have done by his labour, pretends to be sick when he is not, and loses his former habits of industry and self-dependence. The family, too, are all encouraged to be idle. This is injurious to themselves and to the community. A person who

goes amongst the poor, as I do, officially, has the means in many instances of counteracting and guarding against such evil effects. The prayers which I use, and the expressions which I let fall, as it were by accident, in conversation, tend to show them in what their true happiness consists, and how little they consult it when they forsake sobriety, frugality, industry, and other virtues. And sometimes I prevail upon them to come to church when they recover from their sicknesses ; but there is a terrible obstacle to this. They have no clothes but their week-day suit ; and I must confess that I could not expect them to show themselves there, attired so wretchedly. Before I settled in this parish, I was not aware of such a degree of misery ; every poor person had two suits, or at least something better for Sunday. It is not so here ; nor do I see any remedy ; the wages do not allow it. The average of families can but just feed themselves, and any waste at the alehouse or elsewhere by one individual, produces immediate distress amongst the rest of them. When the head of a family is a drunkard, it is a most melancholy case for the wife and children, and a very difficult one for a person of philanthropy to know how to manage properly. The man, finding his family supported by private benevolence, indulges so much the more in his vice ; there is a chance that the sight of the misery

which he occasions at home, might reclaim him. To do good, certain and unmixed good, without any alloy of harm, is quite a study, and requires much local and general knowledge, acquired by constant intercourse with the poor themselves."

"This is a sad, afflicting picture which you draw, my dear Sir," she said more sorrowfully than before; "and I am very reluctant to be robbed of the idea, that, whenever I give, I do good. But I know too well, that my gifts have been sometimes abused. Yet I never give rashly, and at random, from the mere wantonness of giving. I am best satisfied when *you* recommend to me, Dr. Warton; but my long residence here has made me personally acquainted with many families that have stood in need of my help, on account of the constant sickness prevailing amongst them, and I have had sufficient reason, I think, to form a favourable opinion of them. They are very grateful. I am not sure that you estimate the Hintons so highly as I do; but you will be struck, no doubt, as I was, with what Mrs. Hinton said to me, after you left us the other day. It was singular, and it was beautiful; it went to my very heart. 'I cannot thank you, good Madam,' she said, 'I do not know how to do it; *you must thank yourself for me!*' "

To tell this went to Mrs. Bolton's heart again, and her eyes filled with tears. Mrs. Hinton was

the most prepossessing young woman whom I had ever seen in the humbler ranks of life ; her countenance was the sweetest imaginable, and the hectic flush of a decline made it more mournfully beautiful and interesting. A year ago Mrs. Bolton had taken me in her carriage to administer the sacrament to Mrs. Hinton's dying mother, who was brought prematurely to the grave by many sorrows ; very recently she had taken me to the daughter for the same purpose. Mrs. Hinton had never received it before ; she received it then by Mrs. Bolton's persuasion, and great, I believe, was the comfort of it to her, which she tried but was unable to express.

After a short pause of feeling and reflection, I said, " Well, my dear Madam, and your own heart, I presume *does* thank you for her. You have smoothed the pillow of death for this poor young woman ; you have made all her bed for her in her sickness ; you have supported her with the mighty consolations of religion ; you have raised her drooping spirits with the animating hopes of eternity ; through you she has partaken of her Saviour's body and blood, and now reposes peacefully in his love. She was right ; any words of hers would have been but poor inexpressive things ; your own heart alone could thank you worthily. If you have estimated the character of Mrs. Hinton too highly, I had rather be mistaken

with *you* than correct with another of a different opinion."

So saying, and perceiving her deeply affected, I grasped her hand in haste, and hurried away. As I passed the window I beckoned to my children, who soon joined me, and immediately, without troubling Mrs. Bolton with a formal leave, we all went homewards together. In general I was the teacher of others, and they were the learners; to-day I had been the learner myself.

CHAPTER III.

MR. GREATHEAD—HOPES AND FEARS.

§ 1. MR. AND MRS. GREATHEAD, MR. BENSON, &c.

ONE Sunday night, near eleven o'clock, as I was reading by myself, my whole family being gone to bed, a loud and continued rapping at the front door announced some urgent business that required immediate attention. I opened the shutters of one of my windows, threw up the sash, and inquired what was the matter. The answer was that Mr. Greathead was dying, and that he was perpetually exclaiming with vehemence, “Why do you not fetch Dr. Warton? Will you leave me to die without seeing him? I *must* have him here, or I shall die distracted!”

Such being the case, I told the messenger without hesitation that I would accompany him instantly. I must honestly confess that, fatigued as I was with the service of the day, and intending soon to retire to sleep, and the night being very wet, I should most gladly have dispensed with this

summons to go one mile and more from home, with the probable chance of being absent an hour or two. My courage drooped a little; but the greatness of the act which I was called upon to perform, to speak peace to the conscience of a dying sinner, to appease, as I thought, the agonies of a whole family, admitted of no evasions on my part. The minister must spend and be spent for his flock. In a few minutes, equipped with gaiters, goloshes, a great-coat, and an umbrella, I was on the road, but doubting of my own sufficiency, even after so many years of experience. I have somewhere described the apparently-evil effects of this feeling, in causing me to decline opportunities of doing good: on the present occasion, as I had a specific object in view, which could not be declined now that I was sent for, the feeling of insufficiency was of no detriment to me. On the contrary, it prompted me to ask for, and to trust in, the help of a superior power, which might show its strength in my weakness. In truth, there is no sufficiency but in God.

“What is Mr. Greathead’s disorder?” I said to the messenger, as we walked along side by side together. “I fear,” he replied, “that my poor master has got a great many bad disorders, Sir; but it is an asthma of which he seems to be dying now. The worst however is, Sir, that he is sadly troubled in his mind. We hear him all over the

house crying out aloud that the Devil is coming to take him ; and sometimes he is persuaded that the Devil is actually come, and sits at the head of his bed, ready to pounce upon him. Ah ! Sir, he has been a good master to us all ; we shall never see his like again. I hope you will be able to quiet him, Sir, that he may depart in peace. Why, to be sure, he drank a good deal, and meddled sometimes with other women besides his own lawful wife ; but he is very sorry now, Sir, and so you will try to comfort him, I hope, in the way that you know how to do so well, Sir, as I hear. If he departs in peace, I shall be better content."

This was amiable at least in the servant ; so I answered that I would do my utmost for his master's benefit. "But," I asked, "do you ever read your Bible ?" "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I read it now and then, when I can get time." "Then you know perhaps," I said, "that adultery, and fornication, and drunkenness are doomed to everlasting punishment in hell-fire." "I do, Sir," he answered, "but at last my poor master repents." "O, then you think," I said, "that a short repentance, just at last, will be quite enough to do away all the sins of a whole life." He hesitated : at length he replied that, if it were not so, it must go hard with vast numbers of people. "Well," I said, "and so it will. Does not your Bible tell you that only a few will be saved ? Vast numbers

of people therefore will be condemned, and perhaps because their repentance began too late." He hesitated again longer than before ; so I asked him how long he thought his master had been a penitent ? " Why, Sir," he replied, " my poor master had a serious attack two years ago, and he was very sorry then ; and when he recovered we expected to see him a very different man ; but he took to his old ways, Sir, he could not refrain ; and I verily believe he will die in a few hours. But he is troubled now worse than he was before, and I am sure he is in earnest ; he has been so for a couple of days, Sir." " I am glad to hear it," I said ; " it is a good thing to be troubled about our sins in real earnest, even for a single minute. But tell me, do you think your master's case the better or the worse, in consequence of his first repentance, and his falling again into his sins, in spite of it ? " He hesitated as usual, but at length confessed that it *must* be the worse ; " Only now, Sir," he added, " he repents ten times as much as he did formerly." " I am glad of that too," I said ; " if we have been warned, and have not taken sufficient notice of the warning, and God is so gracious as to warn us a second time, without striking us dead at once, surely it requires much more sorrow to place us in the condition in which we were before. I hope your master has really, as you suppose, ten times as much trouble as formerly ;

it is the best thing for him in *his* situation. But God knows what the event will be! Do you think that any quantity of the most sincere repentance will undo what he has done?"

"No, Sir," he replied, "I know very well *that* can never be." "If," I said, "by habits of drunkenness and profligacy, he has ruined his own constitution, and given a diseased constitution to his children, will his sorrow for it afterwards be a remedy for these evils? Will his children instantly become stout and strong?" "No, indeed, Sir," he replied; "it is impossible." "If," I said again, "he has seduced and polluted an innocent young woman, will his repentance, be it ever so deep and sincere, restore to *her* her lost virtue, her fair reputation, her sweet peace of mind?" "Ah! Sir," he answered, "they can never be restored." "Will his sons and daughters, who have been sworn to him before the magistrates," I asked, "cease immediately to be pointed at by the finger of scorn, and called bastards, and to carry this painful recollection about them, because he repents?" "I know it, Sir, I know it," he cried, in a tone of agitation; "none of these misfortunes can be undone." "Well," I said, "I will ask only one question more. Will any of the persons who have been corrupted and fallen into habits of sin by his example be a bit the better for all his sorrow when he lies on his death-bed? Will they even know

anything about it?" "Most likely not, Sir," he answered; "none but his own family will know, and I should think it would be a good warning to *them*." "I hope so," I said; "and in that manner it may be useful to *them*, but what is to become of the rest? Will not God punish him for all the miseries inflicted upon others whom his repentance does not benefit in any way, either by warning them, or by removing or lessening their miseries?" "It is a fearful thing, Sir," he cried, more agitated than before; "I see it now; I see it, as if it was broad daylight; it stares me in the face. But is there no hope then for my poor master?" he asked, with trepidation. "Yes," I replied; "the Gospel gives hope to all sinners; all may be saved by Jesus Christ. But I wish you to understand how difficult it is to save them, and yet to be just."

By this time we were advanced about half-way, and my companion suddenly stopped, and rung a bell at a house which was opposite to us. "Mr. Benson," he said, "is here, Sir, with one of his patients, and I am ordered to take him with me." Accordingly, Mr. Benson soon joined us, and then I desired the messenger to hasten on before us, and announce our speedy arrival. When left by ourselves we began to talk about Mr. Greathead, of whom, in fact, I knew very little, on account of his short residence in my parish; but I had heard

that, being the most goodnatured man imaginable, he had neither morals nor religion. He was a stock-broker; and the Stock-Exchange, I fancy, is not the place in which either are usually acquired. If people carry them there, it is well; and if they keep them afterwards, it is still better; but it is not the school of piety or virtue.

“Tell me, Mr. Benson,” I said, “what is the cause of Mr. Greathead’s severe and dangerous attack?” “Drinking, chiefly,” he answered, without scruple; “he has already suffered severely, and came here to re-establish his health; and as long as the novel employment of putting his little villa-retreat into the most beautiful order occupied the whole of his time and attention, he improved in his strength gradually and steadily, so as to be in a fair way for the accomplishment of his wishes. But you know, Sir, how difficult it is to root out inveterate habits; he returned to them, and they have served him as they did before, or worse. They have brought him to death’s door, and it will be a miracle if he escapes. I really believe I can do nothing for him. His imagination, too, not his disorder, drives him mad.”

“It is the terror of dying,” I replied, “under such circumstances as his. This is a very awful case, Mr. Benson. But what is Mrs. Greathead? A woman of sense and feeling, or what?” “She is very young, Sir,” he answered; “she is his

second wife ; and sorry I am to say, that he broke the heart of his first wife by his profligate course of living. She lies buried in your own church-yard, Sir ; you buried her, I believe, yourself. His grief at the funeral made a great noise in the parish, and I should think you must remember it."

" Yes," I said, " now you remind me, I do. He was a stranger ; but, seeing his grief, I inquired his name, and recollect that it was Greathead. He appeared to be inconsolable, and his friends carried him away almost by violence. I gave him credit for being a most tender and attached husband. I little thought that the pang of separation had been made so keen by the consciousness that he himself was the murderer of her whom he laid in the grave. But was the present Mrs. Greathead acquainted with all this ?" " Perfectly," he answered ; " but the match raised her perhaps in her own eyes, and in the eyes of her family. She and they were poor, and Mr. Greathead is supposed to be rich. He spends a great deal, at any rate. She intended perhaps to have the credit of reforming a rake ; but she was mistaken in her powers, and has suffered bitterly, I know. She does not want sense or feeling, Sir, I imagine."

" Can you give me any account of the children ?" I asked. " They are all very young," he answered, " except one girl, who is illegitimate.

He is reported to have several illegitimate children, but she is the only one who lives in his family. He has no child by his present wife." " *That* may be well for *her*," I said, " whether Mr. Greathead lives or dies. If she has proper feelings, she must have felt, if the circumstance had occurred, that a child of her own would have been degraded by being brought up with another basely born. Indeed, I do not understand how she escapes the imputation of degrading herself voluntarily by her present conduct, or how she can endure the reflection of seeing daily an indubitable testimony of her husband's profligacy. This is not to the apparent advantage of her sense or feeling, Mr. Benson. But I will not judge her harshly; it may be a divine charity; and I hope it is so."

With this conversation we arrived at Mr. Greathead's house. The messenger was at the gate to light us and conduct us in. He took us by the back way, through the apartments of the servants, which appeared to be in the greatest confusion. Every chair had a bundle of things upon it, as if every servant had been packing up something for himself. It gave me the idea of a city which had been sacked, but the spoil not yet carried off. What will these people do, I thought, if their wretched master should recover? Will they return everything to its proper place, as if

nothing had happened, and look *him* and one another in the face, without a blush or a twinge at the heart? Mr. Benson had gone at once up stairs, and in little more than two minutes sent for *me*. I obeyed without hesitation, but not without fear. Before the door of the sick chamber was opened, I had no definite notice of the sight which I was about to encounter; but I imagined the worst. I heard confused sounds of steps and voices, and the very confusion created the more terrible fancies; the very indistinctness added to the expectation of something strange and awful. But now the door opens, and no mystery remains.

“ Why will you not believe me? ” the poor man was crying, with impatience and agony. “ Why will you not believe your own eyes?—Cannot you all see him as well as myself?—Is he not sitting behind me at the bed’s head, to seize upon me for his victim, as soon as I have breathed my last? ” “ But, my dear sir, ” said Mr. Benson calmly, “ you are not looking towards the bed’s head, and how then can you see anybody there, if it were really so?—However, there is nobody there, I assure you, of any sort or kind whatever. ” “ Have I not looked often enough? ” he cried again with the same agony. “ Why will you compel me, by your contradiction, to look once more?—Ah! there he is! ” he exclaimed

with horror, having suddenly turned his head round, and snatched a hasty glance, and beholding the same terrific figure keeping apparently the same watch.—“ There he is ! ” the poor man reiterated ; and then seeing *me*, he exclaimed, “ O save me, Dr. Warton ! save me, if you can ! These foolish people have no power to drive away my enemy, and pretend, forsooth, that they cannot see him, and think it nothing but my own disturbed imagination—Ah ! it is a dire reality, Dr. Warton ! I shall soon be seized, and hurried off below, by this black infernal spirit that has mounted his terrible guard behind me ! I am his slave, and have done his work—fit slave for such a tyrant !—Now I know it to my cost ! ”

This, no doubt, was dreadful to everybody ; but I observed nobody, to mark how they were affected. My whole attention was rivetted upon the man himself alone. As he spoke, he writhed his body about, and betrayed all the sensations of one around whom a thousand devils were crawling on every limb. His eyes darted rapid looks of abhorrence and terror. “ Be silent ! ” at length I said with solemnity, and with my finger uplifted authoritatively ; “ Be silent, I enjoin you, that you may hear what I, the minister of Christ, have to say for your direction and comfort.” In an instant his perturbation was wonderfully calmed ; he expected something, I presume, like a magic

charm at once to expel the king of terrors from his post, and drown him for ever in the Red Sea. His face was fixed on mine with an incessant, undeviating, and anxious gaze. “ We see no spectre ourselves,” I continued, with the same slow solemnity ; “ none of us see anything unusual to alarm you ; but it is very possible that *your* eyes may see something which ours do not.”

“ Aye, aye, Dr. Warton,” he interposed, “ *that* is it ; he shows himself to *me*, and not to the rest of you—his errand is to *me* alone.” “ So it is,” I resumed ; “ and the errand is a gracious one, although delivered by so fearful a messenger. God sends him, or creates the fancy in your own mind (it matters not which, it is just the same) ; he sends him to hasten your repentance for the past, and to redouble your cares for the future. There is a world in futurity to be peopled with countless millions of beings, like *him* whom it hath pleased God that you should see, or imagine that you see, and whom you equally fear and abhor. But what should be the effect of your fear and abhorrence ?—To throw yourself without a moment’s delay upon the divine mercy ; to seek reconciliation with God in the way that he has appointed ; and thus, if it be not too late, to disappoint this wicked minister of darkness and torments of his expected prey. Who knows but that a merciful God, appeased by your tears of con-

trition, and by your prayers for help and pardon, may dispatch a mighty angel of light from his blest abode, the gracious minister of salvation, to replace, with his heavenly guard, this ugly, terrific fiend, whom you so justly dread. It is but the usual goodness of God to the penitent sinner, who desires to recover himself from the snare of the devil, and asks for strength from above to do it."

"Ah! it is too late, Dr. Warton—it is too late!" he cried, interrupting me. "This fiend is not sent to warn, but to take me!" "I hope not," I said immediately; "I trust not, if you begin sincerely to repent." "Oh! I repent, Dr. Warton," he replied with eagerness, "I repent with sincerity, I am sure. I never saw my wickedness so clearly, or deplored it so strongly before. But it is too late, it is too late!" "If your own heart does not deceive you," I said, "it is not yet too late. The purpose of this direful messenger has been accomplished, if you are now really touched with a deep and awful sense of your sins; if you now feel confident, that, with the usual blessing of God upon your endeavours, you would not in any case, should your life be spared, relapse into them again. But still I will not ask God to withdraw him, till God himself see fit. Evil as he is, he has been the minister to you of good. He has given you a lively picture of his kingdom, in which the fire is never quenched, the

worm never dies. You start back, as well you may, with horror from the precipice, overhanging the gulf in which such beings dwell with everlasting burnings; you repent that your passions and appetites ever beguiled you to the brink of such a precipice; you would fly now from Satan to God. If this be no transient feeling, no mere momentary terror of the divine vengeance, to disappear with the disappearance of this frightful spectre, but a permanent principle, the beginning of wisdom, and the seed of righteousness, to spring up and bear fruit under the cherishing influence of God's holy spirit, the gracious object is answered; henceforth you may wake or sleep in peace. This being, I promise you, will haunt you no more."

"I am going very fast, Dr. Warton," he replied with an accent of despair. "In the few hours that may be allowed me here, it will not be possible for me to shew the difference between my former and my present repentance. I was sorry before, but I did not follow up my sorrow, as I intended to have done, with a new life. I am sorry again, doubly sorry, and now I can perform no act to prove it. I am at the last stage, and very soon I shall be seen no more. I feel assured of my own sincerity; but what avails the mere feeling of my own mind? Must I not bear fruit, as you say, to give evidence of the good seed?"

"Undoubtedly you must," I answered; "but only

such fruit as is possible to be produced in the circumstances in which Providence has placed you. God is no severe taskmaster, who requires more than can be done." "Ah!" he exclaimed, with a desponding tone, "there is nothing that I can do now." "Do you remember the poor malefactor upon the cross?" I asked. "I do," he replied, with a look of surprise at the question; "but what of that?" "Could any condition," I inquired, "be worse than *his* for proving his repentance by his deeds?—Yet he was accepted, you know." "I never understood it, sir," he answered doubtfully; "and my case is very unlike." "It is like," I said, "in the way in which I compare the two, and I pray to God that it may be like in the event. In some respects you have greatly the advantage of *him*. You have still a power, which he had not, of doing many needful things in your own person; of repairing injuries, of forgiving enemies, of asking forgiveness from your fellow-creatures for yourself; of doing deeds of charity to your neighbours; of admonishing your companions, and those most dear to you, to shun the paths which once appeared gay and flowery, but now are found to be dismal and thorny. None of these deeds were in *his* power; but his faith supplied the lack of everything else. In *that* no mortal of ages since can equal him. He saw his Saviour dying in agony, yet he believed that he

would live for ever, and could open the gates of death and bliss to whom he would. You know that your Saviour died, but you also know that he rose again, and ascended into heaven. Well, therefore, may *you* believe, that he is mighty to save. Still, poor as *your* belief is, God will accept it as sufficient, if it be what it can be, by his own aid. Still, because he has graciously promised so to do, he will reckon your inferior faith to you for righteousness, when he sees it working as effectually as his providence permits it."

" Well then," he exclaimed, somewhat joyfully, " I will not lose an instant. There are injuries that I can repair, and forgivenesses that I can ask for myself, and persons that I can myself forgive. Bring me pen, ink, and paper," he cried all in a hurry. " Ah!" he started and continued, trembling, " but some that I have injured are dead; *that* is irreparable; they can never be replaced where I found them; they can never forgive me; I cannot ask them to do it; they will confront me in the judgment."

Thus, in an instant, the little gleam of hope, which threw a faint ray over his countenance, was extinguished, and a fearful darkness returned. He had risen in his bed, but now fell back again in apparent despair. I pitied him, but thought it right, nevertheless, for the sake of himself and the rest not to endeavour to mitigate his suffering at

once. "Yes," I said, "it is a painful thing to reflect upon; and let all of *us*, whom it may please God to permit to survive, and to mix again in the business of life, spare ourselves this pang by dealing justly with everybody. Death sweeps away the injured, and the injurer, irremediably; no atonement is made, no reconciliation takes place, and the injury, perhaps, poisons the happiness of the succeeding generation. Undoubtedly if the injurer outlive those whom he has wronged, and has suffered them to die without any abatement of their wrongs, this requires a deeper sorrow; and I hope, Sir, that God will prolong *your* time a little for a more due consideration of it. Perchance, after all, you may find some way of alleviating what you cannot entirely repair, or ask forgiveness of. What *can* be done *should* be done, and for the rest you must throw yourself on the abundant mercy of God through Jesus Christ."

Mr. Greathead rose once more, but being unable to guide the pen, now returned it to the lady who had brought it to him. It was Mrs. Greathead. She was in much agitation, and her eyes were swollen with tears. The pen dropped from her trembling hand, and was thought of no more. She sat down by the bedside, and covered her face with her handkerchief. Mr. Benson took away the inkstand and the paper, advising Mr. Greathead to defer the letter-writing to a calmer

hour. “A calmer hour!” exclaimed the sick man. “When, when shall I see a calmer hour? This threatens to be the last, and you talk of a calmer hour. Dr. Warton, hope flashed upon me, but now I perceive my case is hopeless; fear alone possesses me.”

“You wish me to pray with you, I presume,” I said. “I do, by all means,” he replied. “That was one of the purposes for which I took the liberty of sending for you.” “Let us all kneel down then,” I said, “at once, and may God accept the supplications which we send up to him in the name of our only Mediator and Intercessor, who sits at his right hand for ever, to be ready to present them to him, with all the mighty assistance which he himself can give.”

I had no prayer-book, nor did I ask for one; neither did any person in this family think of giving me one. But they all knelt down, and the sick man, with some difficulty, turned himself in the bed, and went also upon his knees. This was an excellent sign of his humility, and of his earnestness; but a more striking thing followed. In turning over, his face was directed towards the bed’s head, where his terrific enemy had been posted so long, and whom, no doubt, he still expected to see; but, it should seem, he had vanished. The fancy, stimulated by guilt to create images of horror, had ceased for a while to do it,

and lay dormant and quiet; tears burst instantly from his eyes, of which I did not know the true cause; but he soon explained it. Clasping his hand he spoke with fervour, and said, “Thank God! thank God! the terrible spirit is gone!” “God is gracious then, indeed,” I replied, “and deserves your utmost gratitude. But the appearance and the disappearance of this spectre were both merciful. I trust, however, you will render it unnecessary, by your humble and contrite heart, that such a spectre should ever appear again. But let us use the precious moments aright. The calmer hour, which you never expected at all, is come in an instant. Wonderful is the power, infinitely wonderful is the goodness of God! Let us pray to him, let us pray to him!”

My thoughts were now led into a different channel from the one in which they were flowing before, and I began thus:—“O Almighty and most merciful Father, marvellous art thou in thy doings, and marvellous in thy love for the souls of men! Thou turnest them in a moment, as seemeth fit to thyself; thou biddest, and it is done! In a moment thou changest hope into fear, and fear into hope, but both to execute thy purposes of grace. O bless this thy afflicted servant, who thus humbles himself under thy correcting hand, and cause the hope, which thou hast planted in his breast, to grow there into a firmer assurance of thy mercy;

that his desire of recovering thy favour may be quickened, encouraged, strengthened, and established, and all his fears expelled by love. Thou delightest not to break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax ; thou delightest to make the sorrowful hear of joy and gladness, and the heart which thou hast broken rejoice. Thy wrath lay hard upon him ; bitter imaginations possessed his mind ; the terrors of the great enemy of mankind overspread him ; and his soul was tormented with an intolerable anguish, anticipating thy judgments, and incapable of discerning thy mercies. But thou hast lifted up the light of thy countenance upon him, and comfort is come at once. In the midst of his troubles he returned to a right understanding of himself, and sought after *thee*, and resolved to try to please thee by redeeming the past with the future. O give him a true knowledge of the only scheme of redemption which is revealed in thy holy word. Let him understand and feel that the blood of Christ alone washeth out sin. In his zeal to appease thy anger, he would have undone the past, if the past had been capable of being undone ; but it could not be, and the record of his sins still rose up against him, uncancelled, unobliterated, indelible. Thy blessed Son alone can cancel it ; he alone can blot out all the appalling items of the account ; he alone can prevail with *thee* to reckon them to him no more for ever.

Let him then lay hold firmly upon Christ crucified; and do thou send besides thy blessed Spirit, to improve the godly sorrow which now reigns within him; and to renew whatever has been decayed by the fraud of the devil, or his own carnal will. O Father of all comfort, thou hast opened thine eye of mercy upon him; shut it not again in displeasure; continue to regard him with pity and compassion; and allay his troubled conscience with peace through Jesus Christ."

Thus I prayed, combining together various thoughts chiefly from the visitation service, which was so familiar to me. There is no wonder that such a prayer, imperfect as it might be, was useful to one in the condition of my patient. I intended to instruct him whilst I both awakened and consoled him, invoking, at the same time, superior aid. Every good design appeared to be fully answered, and great was my joy when I heard him say, after a short pause of silent abstraction, "It was a happy thing, Dr. Warton, that I sent for you. I am a new man. But it is too much, perhaps, to ask for another favour, that you would give me the holy sacrament. I am most unworthy of it I very well know; but, if you think proper, I would leave no duty unperformed. God puts this in my power; I wish every other were equally so. But, as you have said, the past cannot be undone." "You are unworthy, Sir,

certainly," I replied; " we are all unworthy; but you have the feelings which are essential to a worthy reception of the sacrament; and, therefore, I trust you will receive it worthily. I will administer it to you immediately."

Upon this I rose from my knees; and all the necessary things having been provided and properly arranged in a few minutes, I performed the holy rite. Mrs. Greathead, Mr. Benson, and the nurse were voluntary communicants. The servants declined and retired; nor did I press them to stay. The poor illegitimate daughter had not been confirmed. "It is a pity," I said to her, "that you cannot properly join with us on so striking an occasion. But remain in the chamber, nevertheless. The mere sight of the ceremony, administered at such a moment, and for the sake of one under such awful circumstances, who is your own father, may make a wholesome impression upon your mind, and be not easily erased in after life."

Nothing else occurred which was not common; and Mr. Benson soon left us, taking the nurse with him down stairs, to give her some directions about the medicines, and other things. So there remained with the sick man none but the daughter, Mrs. Greathead, and myself.

§ II.—MR. AND MRS. GREATHEAD.

When the poor penitent perceived that the rest were gone, he said, in a faltering voice, “ I am glad that they have left us. I have been guilty of a grievous injury, and now I will do an act of justice, for which one witness will be sufficient; and no witness could be better than *you*, Dr. Warton.” “ Then so far you will be like Zacchæus,” I replied. “ They who hold any intercourse with the Saviour, must depart as soon as may be from all iniquity. You have partaken of his body and blood; an act of justice is an admirable sequel, and a good proof of the benefit of what you have done. This night, I trust, is salvation come to this house.”

“ Thank you, thank you, Dr. Warton,” he said, with energy, “ for reminding me of that scripture-story. It spreads a comfort over me which I have not felt before.” And at once his brow expanded, and his eyes, no longer scowling darkly and wildly, and expressive of apprehension and fear, became clear, serene, and tranquil. It was evident that hope was growing rapidly in his breast; but it was my business to take care that it did not grow too fast, or from an unsound root; I meant to comfort him by mentioning the story of Zacchæus, but not to exalt him at once into an assurance of his sal-

vation. So I said with caution, “ We must take care that we have put ourselves into *all* the same circumstances, or are capable of doing it, in order to derive a full and well-grounded comfort from any scripture-story. There may be peculiarities in our own case, which give a different feature to it, and destroy the seeming similitude. Undoubtedly every malefactor should think of the malefactor on the cross ; and every fraudulent or unjust man should think of Zacchæus ; and others might think of David ; but if the next thought were that, like Zacchæus, and the malefactor, and David, they would certainly be pardoned and saved, the recording of those stories in the Scriptures would be fatal to many a soul. The first feeling upon reading them will naturally be a feeling of comfort ; we should naturally say to ourselves, the Scripture forbids all despair, even to the worst of sinners. But when we have expelled despair, then we must begin to reason calmly upon the subject, and consider what we have done, and what we have left undone, and what remains to do, to make our cases similar, not in the letter but in the spirit of the transaction, to those which received so signal a pardon. Otherwise our comfort may be but a delusive comfort after all, and our rising above despair may only alleviate the pang of death without leading to our salvation. If a person, on the strength of those

stories, should have pursued the career of profligacy without any check, in the expectation that either on the bed of death or in consequence of some striking unforeseen incident, he might acquire at the last enough of repentance and faith to save him; unquestionably such a person could never properly compare himself with David, Zacchæus, or the malefactor. We have no reason at all to suppose, that they were ever in such a condition as to intend to sin as long as they might be able, or until something extraordinary diverted them from their course of sin; and still less that they had been encouraged to go on sinning by any known antecedent cases of sin pardoned on a death-bed, or under any peculiar circumstances. Here, therefore, the cases will not apply. The person reasoning in that manner puts himself for the time out of the pale of salvation; he endeavours to impose upon God, which assuredly will fail. Still I do not say, that even such a person may not ultimately be saved; but I *do* say, that his heart must be broken indeed; that rivers of tears must flow; that he must abhor himself in dust and ashes, for this sin more than for all the rest. I *do* say that tenfold sorrow and humiliation, and tenfold prayer, importunate prayer, knocking incessantly at the door of heaven, and pleading for entrance in Christ's name, will be absolutely necessary to procure him forgiveness for the wicked thought of his heart."

The sick man listened to me with his whole attention ; but, probably, entangling himself in the letter, missed the spirit of my admonition. He trembled, however, a little, whilst he said, “ I hope, Dr. Warton, I have never acted on such a principle.” “ Have you never thought within yourself,” I inquired, “ that you might safely delay repentance to a future opportunity ?” He trembled now much more, and hesitated ; so I inquired again, “ Have you not even resolved, on some occasion or other, as if it were a praiseworthy or sufficient thing, that you would change your mode of life, or repair an injury at a future period ?” This touched him to the quick, I conjecture ; for he trembled like an aspen leaf. However, with a struggle, he answered me, “ This is no time for equivocations, Dr. Warton. Without doubt I have done so.” “ Well, then,” I said, “ confess it to God, and abase yourself for it. But tell me, why did you do it ?” “ I suppose,” he replied, after a pause of thought, “ I loved my habits too much to abandon them in a hurry, and flattered myself that it would do, if I abandoned them hereafter.” “ Yes,” I said, “ you depended upon the goodness of God ; upon his long-suffering and forbearance ; and so went on as before. Was not this what you did ?” “ I cannot deny it, Dr. Warton,” he answered ; “ it is too true.” “ But how,” I asked, “ did you know of his goodness ? Was it not from

histories recorded in Scripture, such as those of David, the Magdalene, the thief, and Zacchæus?" His alarm increased; but he replied that he did not know in what other way he could have satisfied himself, so as to proceed in sin with the slightest tranquillity. "Certainly," I said, "there is no other plausible way. Of men in general you can never be assured that God has pardoned them, so as to apply their cases to yourself; you can only be assured of it when God tells you so himself, that is, in his holy Bible. And it is this which makes the use of the Bible beyond all other histories. God, without doubt, governs all nations and all individuals by his providence; but often, even the general object of his dispensations is unknown to us, and the particular object always; so that we can only adore without understanding. But in the Bible his dealings with nations and individuals are all explained, so as to be capable of being reasoned upon with certainty, and applied to ourselves with advantage. We, however, are too apt to misapply them, and to become the authors of our own misery. So it is in the case which we are considering. The fact of God having actually pardoned many a sinner, after the commission of great sins, and after a long course of sinning, and even at the close of their mortal existence, emboldens us to try the experiment ourselves. But by doing so, we make our circumstances different

from theirs at once, and no ordinary repentance, or deep repentance, like theirs, will now avail us. The argument by which we deluded ourselves being so false and presumptuous, must now give a new poignancy to every other painful feeling, and increase our sorrow in a larger proportion. We broke God's laws, and mocked him too. He is merciful that we may love him, and fear him ; but we boldly despise him."

" I am guiltless of that, I hope," replied the sick man, in a dubious tone, and as one distrusting himself. " I have broken God's laws, but I have not mocked him, or despised him, I hope, except by a remote and indirect implication ; intentionally, I am sure, never. I believed indeed that God was good, whether my belief arose from those Scripture-stories, or from any other source ; and I delayed my repentance (it is too true) trusting to that goodness. This was a great abuse of God's goodness, undoubtedly ; I am aware of it now, but it never occurred to me at the time ; so I humbly trust that it will not be deemed a mockery or contempt of God. Whatever it may be, I am sorry for it, Dr. Warton, and I will make it a distinct subject for self-examination and repentance. If I ever said to myself, I may safely sin, as David did, because David was pardoned, I understand now, and must acknowledge that I should be a greater sinner than David himself. I

will search ~~my~~ conscience with the utmost severity, and bring every secret thought to the light, if I can. If what I have done be a mockery and contempt of God, God forgive me! It has pleased him that my sufferings of mind as well as body should be extreme. The gratifications of years, when I seemed to revel in joys, were not worth one moment's misery, such as I have felt; the remembrance of them, indeed, increased the misery; they were the very cause of it. Tell the world from your pulpit, Dr. Warton, to shun sensual pleasures altogether, or not to put off repentance. It is wicked, wicked indeed, (I feel it now) to put it off, because God is merciful."

Thus he proceeded, at one instant inclined rather to palliate than utterly to condemn himself, but upon the whole abasing himself more and more, as he obtained a new view of his own condition by reasoning upon the motives of his conduct. I replied thus: "I am glad if I have contributed at all to open your eyes to see the whole extent of your sin. To spare you pain now would cost you so much the more hereafter, when you came to know it, but perhaps without remedy. The misery which you have felt is one of the last reserves of the Divine mercy, and intended graciously to save you. If you had died suddenly, or after a lingering sickness, buoyed up with some false support, you would have been miserable

indeed. This misery opens to you the prospect of happiness. I commend you for your resolution to search the records of your memory, and to leave nothing undiscovered, unconfessed, unrepented of. Repent that you have delayed your repentance ; and, above all, repent that, in delaying it, you have abused the goodness of God ; that you delayed it for the very reason of God's goodness, and very probably because you knew that his goodness had incited him to pardon enormous sinners. But I will no longer delay you from your act of justice, which is the right beginning of a true and substantial repentance."

" Do you see that young woman who sits weeping there, Dr. Warton ?" he asked with great emotion. " Yes," I said, " she is your daughter, and seems to be animated with all a daughter's affection towards you." " But I have been no father to *her*," he replied, with increased emotion. " I have degraded and defrauded her. Her birth, out of the pale of wedlock, has made her an object of scorn ; from this I cannot release her. I might have consigned her to poverty too ; but *that* shall not be. Disgraced by her illegitimacy, she shall not be a poor outcast, at the least."

Here he paused to collect himself ; but Mrs Greathead rose hastily from her chair, and taking the young woman affectionately by the hand, interposed, and said with every sign of sincerity, " Will

you not trust her to *me*, then? I think she has not found me a harsh stepmother hitherto, and I hope she will not find me so hereafter. The more destitute she may be, the more I shall pity her, and be interested in her welfare." The young woman now clung to Mrs. Greathead, in token of her attachment and gratitude, but did not attempt to speak. "Yes," he said, with fervour, "I will trust her to *you*, but not as a pennyless orphan. By what I am about to do, you will be poorer yourself, and my lawful children will also be poorer; but, if I depart in peace, so rich a purchase for myself will be a consolation, I trust, to all of you. The gains of iniquity will never prosper in the hands of anybody. They must be restored." "O, restore them," she exclaimed eagerly; "restore them at once, if you possess anything unjustly obtained, and if you wish for *my* peace, as well as your own! When I was younger, I dreaded poverty; but let it come now; peace of mind will be riches enough in itself to *me*; and I will bring up your children in the same sentiments, if you leave them under my guardianship."

There was a nobleness in this conduct which excited my admiration and won my esteem. The sick man himself felt it deeply, and sobbed bitterly. At length words, intermixed with sobs, forced their way. "Dr. Warton," he said, "I have been twice married; both times an

angel fell to my lot, too good for *me*, and for this world. I was too base to estimate their value; my mind and thoughts, and all my pursuits, were too low, too much chained down to brutal gratifications (I will not spare myself), to be capable of being raised to anything congenial with theirs. My first wife died, and left me the pledges which you have seen. God alone knows how far my ill usage hastened her death!"

A slight convulsion interrupted him here; but it seemed to be his feeling, and not his disorder; for Mrs. Greathead was hastening to ring the bell for help, and he stopped her immediately by waving one of his hands backwards and forwards with impetuosity. However, I myself was greatly alarmed, and wished the deed of justice were done; so I said, "If it will be any relief to your mind to unburden it to me of all that preys upon its peace, I will both hear you willingly, and also frankly tell you my opinion of every transaction, with a view to your more thorough repentance. But it must be at some other opportunity. The present time will be best employed in repairing the injury of which you were about to speak, and the consequences of which Mrs. Greathead is prepared to meet so nobly." "Thank you, Dr. Warton," he replied, now again sufficiently collected; "thank you for reminding me, and bear witness to my last act and deed, as if it had your seal and

your signature. This poor child's mother had a thousand pounds in the funds, which I removed into my own name. I charge you to see it transferred from mine to hers. It never belonged to *me* but by fraud (I will not spare myself again); it belongs to her by all the rights of nature and law. Her mother was left an orphan, with all the complicated transactions of her father to arrange. I was her stock-broker, and persuaded her that all she had was too little to satisfy her creditors. But how shall I tell the rest?"

The wretched man was almost choked with the workings of compunction and shame as well as of his disease, and fell into a fit of coughing which threatened the extinction of his life. My prophetic mind foreboded too truly the direful sequel of his story. Mrs. Greathead was about to ring again, but he prevented her by signs as before; so we gave him all the help we could ourselves, and at length he resumed thus.

"God give me strength and courage to finish what I have begun! I deserve condemnation if I carry the secret with me out of the world. But you will abhor me, Dr. Warton, and fly from the pollution of my presence, and leave me to perish without a single consolation." "I shall not desert you, Mr. Greathead," I said calmly; "the more you need my help, the more I shall be bound and disposed to give it. I am shocked, it is impossible

for me to deny it; and I shall be still more shocked with what is to come, it is easy to foresee; but it is not necessary that you should proceed. You have executed the only substantial act which is of material consequence, and which justice absolutely requires. The detail of particulars will be of no use to any of *us*, and God already knows them. Task yourself, however, minutely and severely, in your own secret breast, between *him* and *you*. Call up all the particulars, and spread them out undisguised before him, and count every aggravation, if you can but reach the sum total. He is pleased with this; it betokens the humble and contrite spirit."

" No, no, Dr. Warton," he exclaimed with vehemence, " *that* will never do—*that* shall be done, but not *that* alone. I will humble myself before men as well. *You* shall know my monstrous wickedness, and cry aloud against it to warn mankind. *That* will be a relief to me." Then he seemed to be gathering all the force which his disease had left him, unnaturally now increased tenfold by his diseased mind, and went on thus. " The poor creature thought herself reduced to poverty, and then threw herself under my protection—Protection, did I say?—O shame, shame! Do I still seek for gentle terms to hide or colour villainy?—I seduced her, Dr. Warton! I betrayed the sacred trust which she had reposed

in me ! I planned a dark conspiracy to rob her of her innocence, her honour, and her fortune !—Nothing less would satisfy me, and I succeeded. Now call me by my true name, Dr. Warton ; retract your comforts—dash to the ground every hope which you have created !—My brain burns !”

This was a terrific scene ; but what immediately followed heightened the terrors of it. Stung no doubt, with scorpions, and urged irresistibly, I presume, by his renewed fears, he turned his head and glanced his eye towards the ancient post of his abhorred assessor. “ Ah ! there he is again !” he exclaimed, like one deranged in intellect ; “ there he is ! and now I shall be seized, and dragged away to my proper abode and my fit companions—a robber, an adulterer, a murderer !”

His mental sufferings exhausted him, and he sank back upon his bed, and muffled himself up in the bed-clothes, although every instant in danger of suffocation. Need I describe the condition of his wife and daughter ? It mocks the imagination of one not versed in death-bed scenes, and is utterly indescribable even by *me* who saw it. I lifted up my hands as I stood leaning over the bed, and clasped them together, and prayed with devotion (for I felt it), and in the most solemn tone of which my voice was capable, being perfectly master of myself in the midst of this trying difficulty. “ O Father of mercies !” I said, “ O God of all

comfort ! show thy mercy and extend thy comfort, in this bitter time of need, to thy poor afflicted servant, who sees thee only arrayed in terrors, like a consuming fire, with the thunder-bolt ready to strike, and thy dreadful ministers of vengeance prepared to execute thy wrath ! O look down upon him from heaven with pity and compassion !—Behold how he humbles himself under thy mighty hand, and abhors his own deeds, and despises all the disgrace of men, to appease thee his offended God ! Accept, O most gracious Father ! accept this voluntary confession of his guilt, which might have been hidden from every eye but thine. He has confessed it of his own will to abase himself to the earth, and to cover his own head with infamy, and to give terrible proof of the sincerity of his repentance. O, raise him up from the dust, and vouchsafe to him if it be but a glimpse even of the skirts of thy glory ! Thy holy angels glow with joy over every sinner that repenteth ; wilt not thou too be reconciled, and soften the terrors of thy countenance, and speak peace to the wounded spirit ? Such did thy beloved Son come to seek and to save ; with such is thy blessed Spirit content to take up his abode ; nay, even thyself, who art the high and lofty One that inhabitest eternity, even Thou wilt descend to dwell with the humble and contrite, to revive and refresh them. Descend, therefore, from thy

high and holy place into the heart of this despondent mourner, and cleanse it from all impurity, and illumine it with a beam of mercy! O let him pursue his repentance with hope, and not in despair! Amen, amen, so be it!"

At this instant the nurse re-entered the chamber, and brought with her a composing draught, which Mr. Benson had mixed up below stairs. This drew my attention from the bed for a moment, so that I did not observe what immediately followed my prayer. Upon turning round again, I saw the sick man sitting up and Mrs. Greathead supporting him. "You have been heard, Dr. Warton," he said, with a placid voice; "your prayer has prevailed, my enemy is gone, and my unburdened conscience is settling into a calm, blessed be God! and blessed be you too, the instrument of his goodness! But let me use this calm to advance another step. Give me the draught; I want sleep;—a little sweet sleep, to close these restless aching eyeballs, may enable me to do great things to-morrow, if to-morrow finds me here—God's will be done! To *him* and my Saviour I commit myself this night. Dr. Warton, you are fatigued. Fare you well! You will see me again, I know, if I live."

Upon this I grasped his hand, and left him without a single word in reply. I was firm before, but deeply affected at the last. The same

servant attended me home; but we walked in deep silence, and in great haste, because of the rain, which poured in torrents. I saw his master no more. That very night, during a sound sleep, terminated his mortal existence. Would that all impenitent sinners had witnessed what I did! God be merciful to *him* and to *them*!

Note, appended by the Author to the story of 'Hopes and Fears,' and written apparently long after.—EDITORS.

I know not whether this piece will ever see the light; but if it does, I wish it to be understood, that I included in my notion of the 'Stock-Exchange,' all agents and dealers in the funds of every description. The Stock-Exchange, properly so called, consists, I believe, of a select body of men, distinguished generally all over the world for their integrity and honourable conduct. In any event, no one will judge a whole class by a single person, or by a single fact.

J. W.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. BROWN—CONTENTMENT.

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§ 1. MRS. BROWN AND MRS. WILKINSON.

I WAS sitting by the bedside of an elderly woman, who was propped up with pillows, and still could scarcely breathe. For many years she had enjoyed excellent health; during the last she had been gradually declining; and her husband, too, being very infirm, poverty seemed to be advancing upon them apace. She was at this moment very restless, and probably in great pain; drops of perspiration hung everywhere upon her face, and, “Ah! Sir,” she exclaimed, though with difficulty, “I wish God would release me; I am always praying to Him to release me.”

“I have no doubt,” I said, tenderly, “that your disorder distresses you sadly, and that your pains are difficult to bear; every humane person who sees you suffer so much must take pity and compassion upon you. Nevertheless, I have great doubts whether you are wise in wishing and praying for what you do. Shall we receive good at

the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil also? Good and evil both come from *Him*, and he has no object in sending either of them, but our profit; both therefore should be received thankfully. The greatest possible evil should not shake our trust in him, or make us fancy that we could choose better for ourselves. It would ill become *us* poor ignorant creatures to tell *him* that we will only be content with what we ourselves call good, and to murmur when he sends the contrary. Your wishing to be released from life altogether must mean, I presume, that you are unwilling to bear what he lays upon you; and yet it may be for your profit far beyond your former prosperity. Your praying to him to take you must, I presume, be the same in effect as saying that you are wiser than he is, and know best what is for your own advantage. Consider this then seriously, I entreat you, and you will probably come at length to understand that such wishing and such praying cannot please God, and that the true wisdom is to submit everything to his will."

In an arm-chair, by the side of the fire, in the chimney-corner, sat a much older woman than the sick one, quite blind and lamentably deaf, with both her hands on her lap before her, doing nothing, and not even hearing what I said to the other, but with a countenance far from listless or vacant. This was Mrs. Brown, who lodged and

boarded in the same house. No answer being returned to my gentle remonstrance, I went and took Mrs. Brown by the hand, and announced myself to her, and sat down as near to her as I could. Her character having been long thoroughly known and appreciated by me, I determined now to converse at some length with her, which I was sure would be useful to her fellow-lodger. Though close, I was obliged to speak rather loud, on account of her deafness; so the other heard me very well, and was put to no inconvenience of finding or making an answer, as she must have been if she had been questioned herself. Mrs. Brown answered for her, and, having a shrill, penetrating voice, was heard as well as I was.

“ My good Mrs. Brown,” I said kindly, “ it is a long time since I have inquired particularly about your circumstances, and I fear I have forgotten some of them, which it might be useful for me to remember. Are you tolerably at your ease to-day, so as to be able to converse with me comfortably, and to recall to my recollection what I may wish to ask you ? ” “ Yes, Sir,” she replied, turning her pale, withered countenance and her sightless eyeballs in the direction of my voice; “ I am better to-day than usual, blessed be God ! but I should be glad, if I were ever so ill, to have the benefit of your conversation, Sir. My circumstances have been sorrowful, very sorrowful, Sir ;

but my gracious God has supported me wonderfully, I thank him for it." "How old are you?" I asked first. "If it please God to spare my life till next June," she replied, "I shall be seventy-nine. Aye, Sir, I am not quite fourscore, but it has been labour and sorrow with me long ago; except that God upholds me and comforts me, poor helpless creature as I am of myself." "How many years have you been blind?" I asked next. "I have been stone-blind, Sir," she answered, "for a dozen years and upwards; but I have no pain now in my eyes, as I had before, I thank God. My blindness was a long time in coming on, Sir; and the inflammation, and the soreness, and the pain were a great trouble to me; and often I could not work for many days together at anything. I fear I was not so patient as I ought to have been, when I knew all the time that God sent this evil for my good. It is a hard lesson to learn, so as to practise it, Sir; but none is plainer."

These answers of Mrs. Brown's fully corresponded to my expectations, and I congratulated myself upon the scheme which had occurred to me for the instruction of the sick woman. I could have given her abundance of good advice out of my own head; but it came much more forcibly to her now in the shape of example, by which the practice was proved to be possible at the same time; so that she could not say, "This is all very

right, Sir; but who can do it?" I looked round to see if she was listening, and was pleased with observing that she was, and with fancying that she was more composed already. She was panting for breath before, now she scarcely seemed to breathe at all: her attention calmed her agitation. I went on thus. "My good Mrs. Brown, I used to find you knitting, netting, or knotting, and it appeared to be a great amusement to you; have you given up the employment?" "Alackaday! Sir," she answered, with a melancholy tone, "my poor fingers are quite *numbed*; for the last month I have not been able to move them, for stiffness. Whether God will be pleased to restore the use of them to me I cannot tell. I was less lonely before; my needles were like friends talking with me; I gained something by them, too; now I am left to my own thoughts entirely, and can do nothing for myself. But God never leaves me nor forsakes me, Sir; and so I am not utterly cast down. I am sensible of many a blessing still. God is good, very good, Sir."

"And what have you got to live upon, my poor old friend?" I asked. "You know, sir," she replied, "that I receive four shillings every week at your house, which a kind-hearted lady raised for me by subscription, and which you are so good as to take the trouble of paying me. Two shillings and sixpence I have weekly from the parish

officers, and one shilling you give me every sacrament Sunday. My rent is paid besides by another generous benefactor, which is eighteenpence the week. A short time ago, I had a shilling a week more from a good lady, who is now gone." Here she sighed, but soon added, "And to heaven, I trust. I have lost this, and the profit of my own work; but in some way or other, by casual bounty, God enables me to make both ends meet. I owe nobody anything; I have reason to be content and thankful, blessed be God!" "You have about a shilling a day certain," I said; "is *that* sufficient to furnish you with food, and firing, and clothes?" "Why, to be sure, Sir," she replied, half smiling, "I do not fare sumptuously every day, nor am I clothed in fine linen; he who was, was none the better for it in the end; so might not I have been. Riches are dangerous; God has freed me from that temptation. They have made themselves wings, and have flown away from me. I am poor; but there is no fear of my stealing, Sir," she said, half smiling again; "these palsied hands are too clumsy to hold anything, and my legs are too feeble to run away. As for fuel, Sir, by laying up a sixpence now and then, I get coals from *you* at Christmas, which carry me very well through the winter. When I am sick, I am chilly too; but, otherwise, my spare body is soon warmed through with a little fire. Clothes,

I want none new; the remnants of my prosperous days will serve me to the end. Since God enabled me to stoop my mind to my lot, I have pawned nothing. You have seen my bed, Sir; in that respect I am as comfortable as ever I was."

"Were you not liberally educated, and respectably married and situated, in your earlier days?" I inquired. "Yes, Sir," she answered; "my education, marriage, and situation in life, might have been called respectable. My poor husband was a tradesman, and did a great deal of business in his own line; but he was ruined by trusting too much in a person who deceived him. He never recovered from that shock; things went from bad to worse; and, poor dear man! his calamities hastened his death. From that moment I saw at once that I was reduced to the lowest poverty, next to the poor-house. I had no capital to continue in business, nor health to pursue it with spirit, or to bear the anxiety of it. I had no relations left—no children to help me; God had taken them all before he took my husband,—his will be done! There were debts to be paid; and to pay them, I sold all our remaining property, save a few clothes, some books, my bed, and a little furniture, which have served me ever since, wherever I have laid my head. For hard work I never was fit in my best days; broken now by

years and by troubles, I did what I could. I supported myself by my needle, and thus gained a friend or two, by the blessing of God, who supplied my wants and necessities, when Providence afterwards ordained a melancholy sickness and this total loss of sight. Long have been my troubles, Sir; but the history of them shall be short. I think of them sometimes, Sir, not to renew the memory of past sorrows, but to mark with gratitude how every one of them was softened to me by the same merciful hand which inflicted them. The design has always been (I see it clearly now) to save, and not to destroy. Pardon me, good Sir, if I talk in this manner before *you*."

If ever there was any true genuine piety upon earth, I beheld it conspicuously now. Her last sentences were beautiful—they were noble; what is still more, they were Christian: *his* heart must have been made of stone who did not feel them warmly and deeply. I got up, and paced backwards and forwards in the chamber, to reflect and to be improved. I forgot the bed-ridden woman whom I came to visit, console, and instruct; I ran rapidly, in thought, over sorrows of my own, and saw, as Mrs. Brown had done, the bright traces of a Providence afflicting but to heal. In *her* I admired, besides, the pure and sober language of unadulterated religion; she had borrowed nothing from the conventicle—neither hypo-

crisy, nor fanaticism, nor phraseology ; she had never been there ; and every prayer-day now you might see her, if she were able to crawl along, going to her church, with a stick in one hand, and leaning, with the other, on the arm of a poor old almswoman, bowed almost double, who conducted her to it and from it, and up to the altar, if there was a sacrament, with the greatest care and attention. This was sincere, unpurchased charity, on the almswoman's part,—what nobody marked with applause upon earth, but what God will reward openly in heaven amidst the applauses of angels. He sees not with our eyes ; the lowest here will be the highest there, exalted far above princes and kings.

At length, recollecting myself and my main object, I sat down again, to derive further instruction from the sick woman, and a further confirmation of my own principles, by investigating still more accurately all the latent springs, resources, and energies of a piety, a resignation, and a contentment, like those of Mrs. Brown. So I said, with a tone of endearment, " My excellent old friend, I am delighted with hearing you talk in the manner that you do ; and, if it is not painful to you, I should wish to go more into the detail of your circumstances. I am particularly desirous to know the course of your thoughts in your present condition. You are quite blind ; you cannot enjoy

the pleasure of common conversation, because you hear with difficulty, even when a person speaks purposely to yourself, and in a louder key; your fingers have lost their pliancy, and the only power of employment which remained to you is gone; whilst you are awake, therefore, you can do little else but think; pray, tell me what it is that you chiefly think about, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, in a state of so utter a desolation, as, I am sure, men in general would call it, but which you yourself know how to render not uncomfortable?"

"Alas! Sir," she replied, sorrowfully, "my thoughts are very various; but I fear it will not edify anybody to know them. To begin with my blindness, I feel how great a blessing it is to me, that I was not *born* blind. Now I can call up again all the scenes of former times; and the faces of my dear husband, children, and friends; and see them all with my mind's eye, although the other be quite dim. The beasts, the birds, the trees, and every creature that I was once acquainted with; the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the vallies, the rivers; the works of God, and the works of men,—all pass before me in turns. I bid them appear when I will; I renew my acquaintance with them; and I trace out their figures, their colours, their uses, and their beauty, with infinite delight. But all this pleasure, which

gladdens the dark wilderness around me, and makes it to blossom, as it were, with flowers, is entirely shut out from one who has been blind from his birth; *his* is a barren wilderness indeed, a black and total darkness in comparison with mine. Ought I not then to be thankful, Sir, to the giver of all good, that in wondrous creation was known to me before he forbade me to behold it? But I think I know it better now; at least I see *him* in it now with my mind, more than I did when I beheld it with my eye. The sun rose and set, and I thought but little of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of his maker; the cares and the follies of the world distracted me; now I bend my undivided thoughts perpetually to the consideration of God's works, and find fresh reasons for adoring him. His mercy is over them all!"

I am happy to record this little speech, which appeared to me then, and appears to me now, to be full of piety and beauty; to answer it I did not attempt, I should only have weakened its power: so I merely said, that I considered it to be a very happy thing for her that she was able to employ her thoughts in this manner; and I begged of her to proceed with the account of the rest of her silent reflections, being assured that I should listen to her with unmixed satisfaction and pleasure. A great heathen poet once commended some illus-

trious men of antiquity, who had fallen into adversity, for the temper and the skill with which they themselves beheld the bright side of their own affairs, and presented only the bright side to others, $\tau\alpha\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\alpha\ \tau\rho\epsilon\psi\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \xi\omega$. In this conduct there was much to praise, no doubt ; but the good was mingled with no little vanity and policy. In Mrs. Brown it was sincere, authentic piety alone ; her treasure and her heart were in another world.

She began again thus,—“ I will readily obey you, good Sir. Your approbation is a great comfort to me, but I expect your kind counsel too. For I cannot hope that I am performing all the duties which belong to one in my circumstances ; and nobody else seems inclined, or can find time, to teach me, otherwise than by reading to me now and then. My deafness is a great impediment, and almost bars against me another inlet of knowledge. It fatigues people to be obliged to speak so loud. But I am very thankful, Sir, that I hear tolerably well in the church. On Wednesdays, and Fridays, and Saints’-days, they put me very near to the desk ; and on Sundays, though not so near, if I am not too feeble to listen with all my attention, I catch the purport of everything sufficiently for my advantage. Indeed, Sir, we deaf people ought to be very grateful to our ministers, who take so much pains to pray, to read, and to preach with strong and distinct

voices. Why after all, Sir, these things are of the most consequence for me to hear ; or the only things almost which are of any consequence. When I look back, I fear that I have spent too much time in vain conversation, for which I must give an account. I know very well how much pleasure it gives to life to talk with our friends upon all the subjects of mutual interest ; life would appear to many to be a dreary waste without it. But to *me*, Sir, left thus alone, there is little that is interesting here. Our children tie us wonderfully to this world, and we like to hear and talk of its affairs for *their* sakes ; and every-thing which befalls *them*, prosperous or adverse, concerns us, and touches us intimately. But mine *are not.*"

Here she paused, and wiped her eyes, which still discharged their function of weeping, after their nobler power was extinct. One tear she shed now for sorrow ; before I left her she shed many for joy. "But mine are not, Sir," she re-sumed with new courage ; "and many other things, which are only of transitory interest to anybody, are entirely past and ended to *me*. I am about to leave this world, and I stand upon the edge of the next, where I shall dwell for ever. *That* is the world about which I am desirous to hear and to talk ; and more especially by what means I may be received into one of its blissful

mansions. This present world has already faded out of my sight; it would be no matter if it were to fade also out of my mind. God is gracious in thus shutting me out, and weaning me from it, and permitting me at the same time to hear so much as I do of that other happy world, for my consolation, and to prepare me the better for it. Ah! Dr. Warton, may I be pardoned, if at my age, but with submission to *him*, I long earnestly every day to be admitted into it? There is my rest; but I am content to sojourn here. It is a blessing to me, that I am able to worship him still in his own temple, so long as it *pleases him*; and to hear his holy word still sounding in my ears."

Such was the constant tenor of the language and sentiments of this aged Christian, bereft of sight, labouring with deafness, excluded from all employment amusing or profitable, without kindred or friend in her present or former rank, (except the humane, deformed, old almswoman,)—in short, one of the poorest in the good things of this world, but one of the richest in faith, and therefore able to bear earthly affliction, and to anticipate all the pleasures and glories of heaven. Who now would *not* exchange conditions with Mrs. Brown, and yet who *would*? What greatness, what enjoyments upon earth, are worthy to be compared with *her* contentment here, and hopes hereafter? And yet who would not try the experiment of

earthly greatness and earthly enjoyments, and delude himself with the vain imagination, that they are not incompatible with heaven?—so blind and foolish are we all!

When I had admired for a few moments in silence, and had looked round to observe, whether the sick woman was still attentive to what touched her own case so aptly and closely, I replied to Mrs. Brown's interrogations;—“ You will be pardoned, my good old friend, I am quite sure of it. Whatever you desire, if you submit your desires to God's will, he will be gracious to you; but as to your present wish, it is not only pardonable, but commendable. Can anything be worth longing for, if heaven be not? Yet it is no impatience of life, no struggling against the yoke, no fainting under the dispensations of Providence, which make you long to exchange, even darkness for light, and sorrow for joy. You are content to abide here still, if God so determine; this is the true filial submission to a wise parent; yet well may you wish like the weather-beaten mariner, with torn sails and tackle, to reach the haven of rest and peace. You have been climbing for many a year the steep, the arduous, the rough, the rugged hill; at last you have gained the top, or near it, and the clouds which covered it are breaking away from around you; sweet, and beautiful, and glorious is the prospect that opens from thence;

and glitters on every side ; below, almost at your feet, you will see fair gardens and bowers of bliss ; you will have only to descend and take them for your own ; the labour that remains will be easy and short, and, I know, you will endure it to the end. But tell me,—you think over in your thoughts the manifold works of God ; do you not think also of his Word ?”

“ I have been weather-beaten, indeed,” she replied, mournfully, “ and my path has been covered with clouds ; but my gracious God has enabled me to see, even blind as I am, the light of eternal day through the dark storm and tempest. I meditate upon his word, and by his help I will rely upon it. It is ever in my thoughts, that he chastens those whom he loves, and scourges every one whom he receives. He has chastened and scourged *me* ; may I not venture to hope that he loves me, and will receive me ? Blessed be God ! he enables me to do it ; it is ever in my thoughts, that he afflicts none willingly. He has afflicted *me* ; can it be but for to save me ? O may he finish his merciful design, and bend me entirely to his will ! It is ever in my thoughts that by sufferings we are made perfect ; by sufferings, Dr. Warton, and not by prosperities. Thus it was that even the great Captain of our salvation was himself made perfect. I have suffered ; and if my sufferings have taught me humility, and have

made me poor in spirit as well as in earthly goods, I bless his dealings with me. If he has anything more to lay upon me, I will be patient under it; I will thank him for his fatherly visitation; I will comfort myself with knowing, that he pities, whilst he strikes, as a father pities his own child, and strikes only to improve and to bless."

She paused, but for the world I would not have interposed, to divert the stream of her reflections. I only touched her hand gently, to show that my feelings accorded with her own; that I listened and approved. After a few moments she resumed, "Yes, my good Sir, I think of God's word perpetually; not only when I lie down and rise up, and at noon, when I eat my daily bread, (seasons for thinking of his word which come even to the busiest of men,) but by day, and by night, whenever he holds my eyes waking, (which is many an hour) my mind is busy with his holy book, and the busier for the darkness of my eyes. I go over my favourite texts, and over again, such as are deeply engraven in my memory and my heart; I ponder upon the explanations and applications of Scripture which I have heard at church; I retrace the patterns which have been set me by holy men; I meditate upon the life, but above all, upon the death, of *him* who died for *me* and for many; and then I pray, that, whilst I live, I may live to *him* alone. Often, Sir, on the day of his death have I

heard you preach, and your descriptions of it still cause me to see and to feel his indignities and his agonies. O that my sins, which were in part the cause, may be done away by those terrible sufferings, and that I may not have sympathised in vain!"

I touched her hand again, but was silent as before ; she proceeded thus :—" My good Sir," she said, " it is in these reflections chiefly that my waking time is spent. But never do I forget that wonderful counsel for the redemption of man, in which God seems to have thrown open all the floodgates of his wisdom and mercy. Those were gracious words which he uttered when he said to his Son and Holy Spirit, ' Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness ; ' but more gracious still, when he planned and determined, with the same divine persons, his eternal fellows in the Godhead, to redeem and to save the wretched fallen creature. He had abused his excellent faculties, and transgressed his Maker's single command ; and what had he to expect but anger, and punishment,—hot anger and heavy punishment without remedy ? But, lo ! pity and compassion instead ; punishment only to correct, and not to destroy ; and an amazing plan of mercy to restore ! This fills all my thoughts to the full, Sir, and I wonder greatly at it ; but I am quite lost in wonder when I think of God the Son, casting off his heavenly

glory, and coming down here to live in our infirmities, and suffering far beyond the sufferings of men, and dying at last on the cross in shame as a malefactor; and all this to execute that amazing plan of goodness! And next immediately I meditate with myself, how light my own sufferings are in comparison of *his*, and with what patience he bore them, suffering too for others, whilst *we* suffer for ourselves and for our own profit! But then, on the other hand, it comes forcibly to my mind, that there will be no escape for me if I neglect so great a salvation; that, if I am not deterred from sin, by knowing that it brought down God's own beloved Son to suffer for it, I must fearfully expect a sorer judgment; and thus I feel a stronger obligation to all well-doing, and more especially to practise the virtues which *he* practised, and to be patient as *he* was patient, under every sorrow. Thus I strengthen myself, Sir, and endure to this day. But, indeed, it is not I who do it; it is the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."

As she said this, she clasped her hands together as firmly as she could, and turning upwards a piercing look, although with extinguished eyes, as if to gaze for *him* who is invisible; and, I doubt not, she saw him by her faith, and was sensible that he was nigh unto her. For her face was suddenly illumined and glowed with a soft tinge of red,

whilst she prayed, as her lips indicated, with a fervid devotion, but in silence. The act was momentary, but the impression upon myself will never be effaced. I did not interfere; I could not. Soon she resumed her former posture; her hands returned useless to her lap; the colour deserted her cheeks, which became wan as before; but her thoughts, it was manifest enough, still revolved over the same meditations, and still were cheered with the same pious comforts.

Again she resumed her speech.—“I hope you will not think me fanatical, Dr. Warton; but my real comforts, I am sure, must come from that great Comforter himself. *I feel* that it is so. My own mind and reasonings of themselves would never bring me to the state in which I am; they would be likely to sink under me continually. And indeed, in some gloomy moments, they seem to do so. There are times when I try to reason upon the gracious promises of Scripture, and to apply them particularly to myself; but, with the best that I can do, I fear that I doubt and waver. Then again, suddenly, with the same reasoning, or with none at all, every doubt disappears, all wavering ceases, and light breaks in. This is the Spirit, Sir, and I can distinguish it clearly, I think, from my own mind. In the hurry of the world men cannot mark, and therefore know not how their various thoughts come or go; but they

suppose it to be from themselves, and from their own observation of things, and their own will. But, cut off as I am from all outward circumstances, with no noise or bustle around me, nothing to disturb the total solitude and deep repose in which I am buried at times, watching the train of my own meditations, I can tell when something comes which is quite independent of myself. A beautiful text starts into my memory, all unexpectedly at once, when I was not taxing my memory to find it, but when I wanted it greatly; or, perhaps, another text, which occupied my thoughts without consoling me, on the sudden appears under a new aspect, surrounds me with light, thrills to my bosom, and upholds my spirits that were ready to faint. I have often heard you say, Sir, that it is dangerous to trust to *feelings*; and I am well aware that they may easily deceive us. But with *me*, Sir, the effect is far from being such as to make me vainly imagine, that my salvation is secure, because I am conscious of an inward comfort, which is the work of the Holy Ghost. I still seek after my salvation with fear and trembling. It breeds within me neither an arrogant self-conceit, nor a proud contempt of others. My joy in his holy comforts is by myself, in my own secret breast, and has no reference to the condition of others, or even to my own eternal lot; but with this support, under every chastisement,

I hope I can still cry, *Abba, Father, thy will, not mine be done.*"

" My good old friend," I said, in admiration of her Christian principles, " I am both delighted and improved with hearing you talk in this manner; and I agree with you in everything. In preaching to a mixed audience I recommend, certainly, to judge by fruits, rather than by feelings, because these are fallible, whilst the other are infallible; but I do not discard the judgment of our feelings by any means. Even the wicked, when they are suddenly checked in their career of sin by an upbraiding conscience, may judge by their *feelings* that it is no reasoning of their own, but the interference of another, which remonstrates against their transgressions of the Divine law, and compels them, if they proceed, to anticipate an eternity of woe hereafter. Much more may the good be able to *feel* that they are helped and forwarded in their righteous designs by a wisdom and a strength not their own. But there are too many preposterous men in the world; they do the works of the flesh, and yet claim to be in the spirit. This claim I cannot allow, when I see those vices in them against which St. Paul denounces exclusion from Heaven. Their feelings evidently delude them, for they create a notion of security in the midst of great danger. To such I say, the spirit is known by his fruits. Yours are

the works of the flesh, and therefore what you tell me of the indwellings of the Holy Spirit, and your sensible perception of it, is only your own over-heated imagination, or the operation of the Devil himself. But I am thoroughly persuaded, that the sincere Christian, who attends closely to his own understanding and heart, may ascertain, that directions and assistances, comforts and supports, are often vouchsafed to him from above; he can trace them at least beyond himself, and he knows that it is from above, from the Father of lights, that every good and gracious gift comes down to men. Most assuredly too, we have the promise of never-failing truth itself, that the pious reader or hearer of the Gospel shall be illumined with an extraordinary ray of light from heaven; that he who struggles against temptations from within or without, shall be strengthened with extraordinary might for so noble a combat; and that he who resigns himself unreluctantly, and strong in faith, to the painful dispensations of Providence, shall be upheld by extraordinary comforts, and fortified with a more than mortal patience, and rendered even capable of rejoicing in sufferings, as being the discipline of an infinitely wise and good parent to bring him to Heaven. My good old friend," I said, gently grasping her hand, " I please myself with thinking, that you are arrived at this point, and that your next stage will be to heaven itself, and that all

your afflictions will work together for your good, in an increase of bliss and glory, beyond comparison, beyond proportion, beyond conception."

Her tears now began to flow in abundance, and she could not utter a word; so I proceeded myself—“ It is not my character to flatter deceitfully, and suggest fallacious hopes; I speak my real sentiments. Your faith and obedience have been tried in the fire, and they only shine the brighter; be therefore assured, that they shall be exalted soon to a place, from whence there is no more chance of falling; for faith will be sight, and obedience will be unmixed, unutterable joy. From that place you shall look back on the sorrows of past time, and see how every painful step mercifully advanced you on the way towards the glorious realms of the blessed; and then you shall love and adore God the more with every new faculty that you have, and every old. Your patience is already recorded with that of the other saints, in the book of life, and ministering Angels from below proclaim it with trumpet-tongues to their fellows above who encircle God’s throne; but when you have put off your mortal clay, you shall yourself hear a voice from Heaven, resounding in your ears, and enrapturing your soul, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord! Thou shalt rest from thy labours henceforth, and thy works shall follow thee! ”

This only caused her tears to flow the faster, and

in larger streams ; so I rose from my chair to gain a little time for her, and to collect myself, and instantly I perceived the tears of the bed-ridden woman flowing too. A few steps brought me to her side ; and, without waiting for me to speak to her, she began at once to reproach her own ignorance, and impatience, and lack of fortitude. " Ah! Sir," she said, with the same difficulty as before, but with a chastened tone, " I hope you will forgive me, and I hope God will forgive me. I have had very little learning, Sir ; and I have slaved so hard all my life, that I could not find the needful time to read my Bible, or go to church, enough for my instruction and comfort. But I have learnt a great deal all at once, in these few minutes, from good Mrs. Brown, and from *you*, Sir ; and I see very well how wrong I have been in wishing for death to rid me of my pain, and my fears of poverty. Ah! Sir, pain and poverty are sad evils, and I have never been used to them, and I cannot tell how to bear them ; I can think of nothing else ; the pain is always present, and the poverty is always in prospect and even pinches already, and I have no relief at hand. To confess the truth honestly, Sir, I was never very patient when I was well ; every little cross disappointment vexed me and put me out of humour ; so now real misery is too much for me. But I will pray God not to take me, as I did before, but to make me like Mrs. Brown, if such a

thing be possible ; for I am sure it must be a good thing to be like *her*, both for one's own comfort, and lest God should be provoked to be severer still, which would quite destroy me."

This was the substance of what the poor sick woman said. In spite of her breath, she spoke at great length, and, as was probably natural to her, with a vast deal of circumlocution, which I have not recorded. I heard her till she was exhausted, without interruption, and without betraying any impatience myself. When she stopped, I said immediately, " I am glad to observe so great an improvement in your temper, and you will go on, I trust, to something even better. Why, even before Jesus Christ came to teach us by his laws and his example, the uninstructed heathens, without any religion at all, recommended patience to us for the sake of our own comfort. Impatience, repining, and murmuring, they knew very well could not remedy evils by any means, but *must* make them more painful and less tolerable. Common sense, therefore, taught them the use of patience. But religion, even a lower religion than the Christian, carries us immediately a step further than they were able to go, except indeed a few of them, and bids us consider the evils as sent by God, who governs the world, and is a Being of almighty power ; from which appears the great danger to ourselves of calling upon such

a Being, impatiently, to rid us of our evils and our life at once, which must needs be very offensive to him. Suppose that he did it, what would become of our souls, snatched away in a moment so unfit, and so unprepared to meet *him* who gave them? Or suppose that our impatience caused him to increase our evils, in order to punish us and correct us; it would be merciful in him to do so rather than destroy us; but, remember, we bring this judgment upon ourselves. It is the only remedy perhaps to save our souls. The greatest evil in this world is infinitely less than the very least evil in the next world. However, if we stop here, we stop far short of the knowledge and behaviour of a Christian. We must take into the account, that God is not only powerful, but infinitely wise and good; and that he loves us all, and wishes to save us all; and, therefore, that he orders his dealings with us in such a manner as to improve us, if we ourselves, with *his* help, make that use of them which is the proper one. This gives a different view to everything. He afflicts us, for instance; what then? He has a gracious design in it, and if we complain bitterly, and will not endure it, this *must* frustrate his design, both towards ourselves and others also. If we ourselves are indeed already true Christians, his design may be, to show others, by *our* example, what a true Christian is; what a true Christian

can bear contentedly—yes, and even kiss the rod, and thank *him* who inflicts it, looking to the recompense of reward hereafter. But the meaning of affliction generally is to correct and amend *us*, in our own persons, which prosperity rarely does. When affliction comes, therefore, what ought we to do? Why, we ought to search most closely and impartially, into our own character and conduct; and, without doubt, we shall find abundance that is amiss in our hearts and lives; and, however easy we may have hitherto remained under it, if not repented of and altered, it will certainly ruin us for ever. This causes our affliction. Let us repent and amend, therefore, and then the affliction will probably cease, having accomplished its main object. But, if it continues, blessed be God! it is a token that he chooses us to be a pattern of suffering, to fill up the pattern of Christ's sufferings, and great beyond all calculation or thought shall be our reward in heaven. Yet we may ourselves defeat this gracious scheme of divine love, if we will, by our own frowardness and impatience."

When I paused here, the sick woman exclaimed in broken sentences, her disorder and her agitation both impeding her, " I have been very wicked, Sir—I have been very foolish, Sir; I have neglected God, and yet I never thought that my soul was in danger. I was no worse than my

neighbours ; I trusted to *that*. So all I wanted was to be out of my present misery. I never considered *that* which might come, and which must be so much worse. But my eyes are opened. How wicked and how foolish I was ! I see now that I should have been lost, if God had been so angry with me as to grant me my wish. I see now that he is wonderfully good in sending this sickness, and continuing it against my own will. But whatever remains to be suffered shall be *with* my own will ; and I hope it will not be unto death, but that he will spare me to show my thankfulness. And I will search, Sir, as you bid me, into myself. I need not search far to know how sinful I am, and how unlike Mrs. Brown in everything. Ah ! Sir, how few will be saved, if none can be saved who are unlike *her* ! ”

“ If you are sincere in what you say,” I replied soothingly, “ and I verily believe you are, God will spare and prolong your life, I feel confident, in order to give you time to execute your present good intentions, and that you may die some years hence a better Christian than you would die now. My notions of God’s goodness are exalted beyond all bounds ; and nothing can ever shake my firm persuasion—a persuasion which fills me with unutterable delight, that he takes us all from this world at the moment which is best for ourselves. In *my* judgment, therefore, whether you will live

or not, depends upon your own sincerity. Indeed God often restores the insincere, because, I believe, he takes no man away until he has tried the proper means of improving him, or shown by facts that nothing is likely to make him more fit to die. The good he sometimes removes out of the way of too dangerous temptations ; the bad he often leaves, that, if they will, they may become, by due chastisements and other assistance, good. You are very sick, undoubtedly, and anybody would suppose that your death was near at hand. The doctor probably supposes so ; but I do not—Why ? Not because I know more about your disorder than the doctor does ; but because I see so great and so wholesome a change in your mind and heart, and so strong a probability that the change will be still more effectual, and that you will become more like what God wishes you to be, if an opportunity were indulged to you. My trust is grounded on this foundation ; and, as for the possibility of your recovery, it is just as easy for God to raise you up again, even from this almost hopeless state, as it was for him to throw you into it. Only, if he is so gracious as to listen to your prayers and vows, and indulge you with such an opportunity of amendment, do not yourself frustrate his merciful design by forgetting *him* and your own resolutions, and returning to your former habits. If he spares you now, he will also help

you constantly, at your own desire, so as to put your future eternal salvation practically into your own power."

The sick woman, Mrs. Wilkinson, appeared to be deeply affected with what I had just said, and quite unable to speak: so I proceeded thus:—“ Whatever may be the determination of God’s providence—for however short a time you may be permitted to live—you will be right in copying after Mrs. Brown. Few, indeed, are like *her*; and that is one reason why only a few will be saved. Scripture says, only a few in comparison with the many; and certainly the rich and the prosperous are less likely than the poor and the afflicted to be amongst those few. Yet even the poor and the afflicted will not get to heaven merely because they are so, but because, under their poverty and affliction, they are patient, resigned, and contented, remembering the sufferings of their blessed Saviour, trusting in the promises of their heavenly Father, and praying for the comforts and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. This is the short description of Mrs. Brown’s religion, temper, and circumstances. She has been afflicted much; but she loved so much the more. It is scarcely possible for *you* to be tried as she has been, and still is; but her suffering temper, her fervent religion, with God’s blessing, you may yet acquire. If your circumstances be less painful

than her's, there will be the less struggle against your infirmities, to say with *her*, 'I will stay upon my God; in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' I will ask her if you please, for *your* edification, and for my own too, to tell us a few of the texts of Scripture, which by her own reasonings, and by a better aid, have been brought home to her bosom, and now uphold her with a supernatural support. She has already mentioned some; but she has many more, I doubt not, and will be very glad to talk of them."

§. II.—THE SAME.

Upon this I returned to my chair, close by Mrs. Brown, and touched one of her hands, and said, "You know how very ill poor Mrs. Wilkinson is, and how much she stands in need of some solid comfort. There is nothing more useful than texts of Scripture under calamity and affliction, as you yourself continually find by your own experience. Besides those which you have already alluded to, I wish you, if it be convenient and agreeable to you at the present moment, to repeat two or three, which have been most effectual in soothing the anguish of your troubles, infusing a calm over the agitated soul, hushing complaint, inspiring

patience, begetting contentment. What has been successful in your own case may succeed with another, if the holy Comforter intercede for us."

" Yes, Sir," she replied with energy, " without *him* all our reading, and repeating of texts will be of little avail ; we shall dwell on the letter and not imbibe the spirit of Scripture ; but the letter profiteth nothing, and only puffs up the mind with empty knowledge. In the very beginning of our great Saviour's discourse on the Mount, amongst the beatitudes, as I think I have heard you call them, Sir, there is this beautiful sentence : ' Blessed are they that mourn ! For they shall be comforted.' You will not wonder, Sir, I am sure, that I prize this sentence at a high value ; whenever it comes into my mind (and I have very frequent occasion for it) it gives me the greatest consolation. Without looking into the next world, my comfort begins here. Why, Sir, any person under suffering, who knows that he shall be comforted, derives comfort from that very knowledge alone, and is more able to endure steadfastly to the end. But then, what I mean by knowing, is the being quite sure in his own mind without wavering, and the having a perfect faith in God, that every sentence of Scripture shall be fulfilled. If I had not this faith, Sir ; if I ever doubted whether I should be comforted, or not ; when the doubt came over me, this sweet passage would not console me.

But, blessed be God ! this is the work of his Spirit, that in this respect my faith fails not."

" You are very correct," I replied, " in the distinctions which you make, my good old friend ; and, certainly, without the Spirit we are too weak and frail to have a steadfast faith of ourselves. But to apply this text aright, (which I mention for the instruction of poor Mrs. Wilkinson,) we must be careful not to mistake what 'mourning' means ; because there is an intemperate sorrow, a sorrow beyond the bounds of all moderation, and there is a worldly sorrow, for the mere loss of worldly things, which, so far from having any promise of comfort attached to them, lead only to the dismal chamber of eternal death. Persons, who loose all the reins to such sorrow as this, live and die without hope, and therefore without comfort. In pain and calamity, however, men *must* mourn, more or less ; God intends that they should ; but always with reference to himself, as being the author of their afflictions. And this reflection, that they do not spring from the dust at random, but are ordained for our good by a wise and merciful ruler, moderates our grief at once, and keeps it down within narrower limits. But in the case of bodily pain, some men seem incapable of bearing it with the least degree of fortitude, and mourn even extravagantly. To *them* God, who knows whereof they are made, will be compassionate, I trust, if they mourn without

murmuring against *his* dispensations ; if, whilst they mourn, they submit nevertheless to *him*, he will comfort them, I have no doubt. After all, the most reasonable cause for mourning, and for the greatest degree of it, is the consciousness of guilt. There ought, indeed, to be no cessation of mourning, no remission of it, until sin be rooted out. But he who knows that this work is going on, and believes the Gospel, shall have unutterable comfort. No pleasure shall equal *his*. Blessed, indeed, is such a mourner ! His very sufferings shall be a comfort to him, because he feels that he is made a child of sorrow, for his sanctification here, and for his future glory in the world above."

" Many, many thanks to you, good Sir," Mrs. Brown replied, the instant that I stopped, " for explaining this text so clearly to me, which I did not see before in any other view than the one applicable and consolatory to myself ; and I humbly hope that God will be graciously pleased to reckon me still amongst the mourners, whom he will continue to comfort and improve, as long as I sojourn in this vale of sorrow. My sorrow, I trust, is not of a worldly kind *now* ; so far as the world is concerned, I am now contented and happy. If it was ever too great, it is now softened by time and habit ; I can bear my condition now without wailing or desponding. But I cannot press on so well and so fast as I could wish, to

the filling up of all which yet lacks to enable me to make a good confession when I am called to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For every active virtue, alas ! I am totally disqualified. The thought of this grieves me sometimes ; but even this grief is comforted by another thought, that nothing is impossible with God, who is the author of all conditions ; and that there are virtues pleasing to *him*, which may be practised in all. These, the passive virtues, I make my constant study ; and, oh ! that with *his* aid I may practise them, according to the power which he gives me, without ceasing ! For such a disposition I shall ever earnestly pray. If I fail, forgive me, most merciful Father, for thy dear Son's sake !”

Thus did this excellent woman conclude her pious sentiments, with clasped and uplifted hands ; and “ she was heard in *that* she feared,” I assure myself with a full confidence. I looked round, and saw that Mrs. Wilkinson was very attentive, and deeply interested in what was passing ; so I continued the conversation thus :—“ You will not fail, my good Mrs. Brown ; with such a disposition you cannot wilfully fail ; God, I trust, will not suffer you to fail at all. If there be any human weakness still clinging to you, he will strengthen it to endure the trial, or our gracious Intercessor himself, with his own hand, will blot out the record of every involuntary error, and of every mortal

frailty. But now tell me whether this noble text of St. Paul to the Corinthians does not also dwell in your thoughts, and elevate and cheer them: 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

"Ah! Sir," she replied pensively, "if I had but the same reason as the Apostle to cherish so bright a hope, and the same faith to overcome all the opposition of the flesh, that one text would be better than a pearl of the richest price to me; that same text would be sweeter than honey or the honeycomb; it would be always upon my lips and in my heart. But I must think soberly of myself, Sir; I must not be highminded, but fear; I must humble myself under the mighty hand of God, if I would have him to exalt me in his own good time. It is wonderful that he should care for such a poor creature as I am! It is still more wonderful that such a poor creature as I am should become capable by his mercy of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Light, indeed, very light, when compared with *that*, is all the weight of affliction that can be laid upon me in the longest life! and the longest life itself, compared with eternity, is truly but for a moment. This

noble text therefore would give me infinite delight if I were assured, beyond all the fears of the flesh, that affliction was working for me in such a favourable manner as to terminate so gloriously in endless felicity. But my affections at least are fixed on the things above, Sir; all my thoughts run upon the things which are not seen; the temporal have long ago palled upon my desires, which can now be satisfied with the eternal alone. If God would be graciously pleased to accept my desires (and I have little else to offer him now), I might get to heaven, Sir; but the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, for which I am totally unworthy, quite astonishes and overwhelms me. To be made a door-keeper in his house will far surpass any desert or qualification of mine."

When Mrs. Brown came to this close, I thought to myself, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!" I saw now, even more strikingly than on former occasions, that contentment and all its kindred virtues, but especially humility, were completely wrought into the character of this most excellent woman; so it seemed impossible that I could encourage her and raise her expectations too much. I said therefore, in the tone of one who approved and admired, "Yes, my good old friend, we learn from Scripture that the very lowest station in heaven is higher than the highest upon earth; and therefore

the door-keeper's station may well exceed our merits. He too may sometimes behold the great Lord of the mansion face to face, which will be bliss unspeakable. Nothing here can give us any idea of it; nor do we know what we ourselves shall be; but we know that, if we arrive there, we shall be like our Redeemer in his glorified condition. Without doubt, besides all the glorifying of our bodies, the present faculties of our minds will be enlarged to the utmost possible perfection, and new ones bestowed upon us far superior to anything which we can now imagine; so that the very humblest in intellectual attainments here need not fear that they will be disqualified for the intellectual enjoyments of heaven. To see God face to face. (which means, I believe, not merely to behold a dazzling splendour of light surpassing the light of the sun, or any supreme glory and majesty which might be supposed to surround the throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords, but to behold the wondrous attributes and perfections of God represented before our eyes, and infusing joy unutterable into our hearts,) to see God in this manner *must* require faculties of a new order, I presume, and not merely the enlargement of the old; which new faculties may be conveyed to all the blessed alike, whatever they may have been in this lower world, whether illiterate or learned, whether peasants or philoso-

phers. Of this we may be certain, that whomever God exalts to heaven, he will give them faculties to understand and enjoy all the felicities and glories of the place, as well as the beatific vision of himself. The merits of the receiver will have nothing to do with it; the giver will measure his gifts only by his own immeasurable and inexhaustible bounty. When *he* gives, it does not befit him to give only as *we* deserve to receive; he can only give with a measure heaped up and running over. It is true he will reward men according to their works; but this does not mean that the reward will bear any exact proportion to the work; it regards the workers only, and divides them into their proper classes, and assigns them their different mansions; but still the very lowest mansion surpasses beyond all proportion the very highest work; and the lowest, the meanest, and most illiterate Christian upon earth may gain the highest and most distinguished mansion in heaven. Such is the astonishing, inconceivable profusion of bounty, which an all-bountiful Master, like ours, will lavish around him, with both his hands, on the heads of those who shall be sealed for the day of redemption. Cheer up, therefore, my poor old friend! God does not require such a foundation for *his* building as talent and genius, learning and knowledge; they may be no better in his sight than hay and stubble. He will build

upon the Christian graces, which his Holy Spirit has wrought in the hearts and lives of his faithful servants; these are the gold, the jewels, the precious stones, which even the fire will but refine, and purify, and increase in lustre. You have been transformed already by the renewing of your mind; you shall be transformed again, when your body has been redeemed from the grave, by another transformation both of body and mind, which shall make your body spiritual and your mind angelic, and fit them both to dwell in the presence of God for ever, and to see him as he is. With but a few glimpses you adore his wisdom *now*; you shall adore it and scan it *then*; *now* you behold enough of his goodness to admire and love; *then*, when you shall behold millions of streams of it issuing from the same perennial fountain, and flowing over the boundless universe, when you shall see how evil itself is good, you will be enchanted, enraptured, and transported with it."

This was too much for my humble listener, who wept and sobbed copiously, whilst she drank in every word, and strained every faculty to comprehend my description of scenes that were to be hereafter, and on the verge of which she herself was now standing, ready to enter and enjoy. I had myself spoken with warmth and was proportionably affected. So again, to abate the feeling, I removed from my chair to the bedside,

intending to speak to the sick woman; but she spoke first herself. "Ah! Sir," she said, mournfully, "what is to become of *me*! When I look into myself, as I am *trying* now to do, I see nothing but sins; not one virtue to comfort me." "Well," I replied, "do not despair. It is a great thing to have discovered your own condition, which, perhaps, you would never have done but for this grievous sickness. You have, therefore, profited by it already, and consequently now understand by your own experience, that it should not only be borne with patience, but also with gratitude. For it is contrary to all reason, when we are profited, to be impatient and ungrateful. But what are you to do next, to get comfort in so comfortless a state as that which you describe, unfurnished of all virtue, and laden with sins? Why I will give you a text to help you; an invitation from Jesus Christ himself, which you have only to accept, and comfort springs up at once. 'Come unto *me*,' he saith, 'all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will refresh you!' Did you ever hear any music so melodious as this? Does not the sound thrill to your very heart? You are heavy-laden, you say; and it seems that you are also weary of the load, and would rejoice to be relieved and refreshed. Then you have only to go to *him* who so lovingly calls you, and of his own accord, without any solicitation of

yours, makes you so gracious a promise. He will receive you with open arms."

"But how can I go to him?" she asked immediately, and incredulously. "He is not now upon earth. Does not he sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, Sir?" "Yes," I answered; "but also, where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is *he* in the midst of them, by his Spirit, if not in person. In fact, he does not trouble us to go to *him*; when we feel the want of him he comes to *us* by the means of that Holy Spirit; the simple consciousness of the want is enough; he himself seeks those who feel the want of him, in order that he may save them." "How is this, Sir?" she asked again. "I ~~ought~~ to understand it, but I am sadly ignorant; I have neglected my poor soul, whilst I have been toiling hard to do well for my body. But if I had ever come to an easy condition, I intended then to take better care of my soul. Ah! Sir, this will never be; if I live, I shall live in poverty for the rest of my days. But I will delay no longer to look after my soul. If I understand you properly, Sir, I shall do it better in sorrow than in ease."

I was very much struck and gratified with this. The picture which she drew of herself would suit nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of mankind; who, some of their own will, and

some by a sort of compulsion, involve themselves inextricably in the labyrinths of worldly delusions, whilst they grasp at riches, honours, and power, or wildly pursue every phantom of pleasure that flits and glitters before them. They who struggle for their daily bread, and live from hand to mouth, as the proverb says, are alone to be excused and pitied. But it would be well for all of them to follow the example of Mrs. Wilkinson, and not to defer the care of their souls to a season, which they themselves may have marked out as most convenient for such a purpose; for they know not whether that season will ever arrive, or whether God will bless them, if it does. Weigh this well, my readers, I beseech you all; it concerns your everlasting welfare.

These reflections came and went rapidly; so I replied without any apparent pause—"At least," I said, "you will begin the better in sorrow: for sorrow makes people serious, and shows them how little dependence is to be placed upon earthly things; and then it is likely that they may be induced to enquire, whether there is anything, anywhere else, which is stable, and not liable to change, and entirely to be depended upon for ever. Having found something of this sort in sorrow, let them pursue it vigorously when they are in ease; sorrow is the time for resolutions, ease for practice. But if it should please God that sorrow in some

shape or other should be our companion through this life, why still, though blind, and deaf, and paralysed, and reduced to the lowest indigence, we can serve him as he delights to be served in the exercise of patience, resignation, and contentment. Thus does the good Mrs. Brown serve him. But I will tell you now, in a very few words, how you can go to Jesus Christ. You have discovered your own sinfulness and danger ; you want to be forgiven, to take courage therefrom, and to set out afresh without the dead weight of so much sin hanging upon your conscience ; but God's justice, which *must* punish for sin, which *must* be appeased by some worthy satisfaction, before it can spare one single sinner, stands terribly in your way, like a flaming sword, and threatens your destruction. Well, but hear—Jesus Christ has suffered the punishment for us all ; he has made the worthiest satisfaction to God's justice that could have been made ; and now therefore God is appeased, and reconciled, and disposed to forgive. To go to Christ, therefore, is to know what he has done for you, to believe in the efficacy of it, to accept it as your only support, to put your full trust in it, and in the strength of that confidence to walk hereafter in newness of life, following the commandments, and copying the example, of your Saviour himself."

"I never knew all this before, Sir," replied the

sick woman. “ I thought that I had nothing to do but to repent, and then that everything else would come of course. But I see now that I did not even repent. My trouble was not for sin, but for my bodily pain ; and if I had died an hour ago, as I wished and prayed to do, I should have died with all my sins upon my head, without understanding at all why Christ died for me, or how his death was to profit me ; so I should have died without any acceptance of him, or trust in him whatever, except that I was baptized, and confirmed too, and often went to church in my earlier days. Surely, Sir, it was a merciful providence which sent you here this morning, and I hope you will do me another favour by praying for me before you go. I have almost always prayed at bedtime, Sir ; but I fear now that my very prayers were sins ; for they were nothing like what you have just taught me.”

I was exceedingly delighted with this frank acknowledgment of unworthiness, and most anxious to further her present desire of praying ; but I thought it might be useful to refer again to Mrs. Brown before I complied with her request : so I said, “ I will pray for you by all means ; but I will first ask good Mrs. Brown, what is her own practice with regard to prayer ; what is the subject of her prayers ; and what comfort she draws from them. We shall learn a great deal, which will be

edifying to us both, I have no doubt." Upon this I returned once more to my chair, and told Mrs. Brown, that Mrs. Wilkinson wished me to pray for her—"But," I said, "this is one of the questions which I intended to ask *you*; whether your thoughts do not continually run into the form of prayer, and how you feel during the time and afterwards. I often tell people, both the sick and the well, that they ought to be much in prayer, and that they ought to be delighted with it; they agree with me, perhaps, about the duty, but doubt about the delight of it. They may be comforted too with praying, as with the performance of any other duty; but delight in it is another thing. Tell me, therefore, if you please, my good old friend, what is the course of your own experience; you will oblige me greatly."

Her reply to this question began in the most impressive manner; the thought appeared to be, though not quite new to me, yet wonderfully striking and great. "If," she said, whilst her lips quivered, "some being, whom I could not resist, were to say to me, 'You shall pray no more,' the shock would lay me flat on the earth; and, if my senses ever returned to me, the horrible sound would still strike upon my ears, and unhinge my mind, and afflict my very soul, till I could hear it no longer." Thus far she went, and then her feeling stopped her utterance. I was myself almost lost in admiration; but, to help her, I said,

" It is very true ; you have put the matter in the most convincing light. There are multitudes of men who take no delight in prayer ; there are many who neglect it without any sensible pain ; but tell them that they shall pray no more, and, I am sure, amazement and dismay would seize upon them. They who neglect it most probably intend, some time or other, to have recourse to it, as their final resource. But, when a final resource is suddenly and unexpectedly cut off, nothing remains but flat despair. This is true of everything, but how much more of prayer, which is our main link with heaven."

" Aye, Sir," she resumed, but still agitated, "*that* is the very thing. He who forbids me to pray, would break the link and separate me from heaven. It would be the same as to say, ' You shall have no more communion with God ; you shall never lift up your hands to him again ; you shall converse with him no more ; you shall live, whilst you live, as if there were no God—no providence, no eye of wisdom or goodness, watching over you.' At once, Sir, all peace and comfort would desert me, and be strangers to my breast thenceforth for ever. I should be desolate indeed. All would be a wide waste around me. I should be doubly blind ; both body and soul would be destitute of a single ray of light."

She stopped again from feeling and energy, not

for want of ideas or words. She was prolific and eloquent in the description of her own probable forlorn state without prayer; and this was an abundant proof in how great a degree prayer was the habit, the support, the consolation, the delight of her existence. The fact was thus demonstrated beyond all dispute; but I did not consider this to be sufficient for the instruction of Mrs. Wilkinson. So I went on to draw her out into a particular enumeration of the uses and the pleasures which she derived from prayer. "It is, undoubtedly, a very terrible thought," I said, "for any one who is capable of thinking seriously, to be deprived of the chief means of communicating with heaven; but it must be more especially so to one, whose treasure and whose heart are already there, who is perpetually and unceasingly aspiring upwards after it, and who considers this world as what it really is, a mere passage to the other, during which alone can be acquired the qualifications which that other demands. All who are fond of wisdom and virtue seek the society of those who are distinguished for such excellent endowments; but as it is only in heaven that those endowments will be found in their full perfection, it is no wonder that the wise and good upon earth should wish to be there, and should open an intercourse with its glorious inhabitants beforehand, and should become as intimately acquainted with them as

they can. No wish, no employment can be better or nobler than this. But now, when we add that those glorious beings are also interested greatly about *us*, and desirous to have us amongst them to share in their felicity; that all the blessed angels are spirits who minister to our salvation, and overflow with joy when they behold us advancing thereto; and that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are supreme in all power, wisdom, and goodness, have done, and are always doing, such unspeakable deeds of love towards us; what happiness should be more agreeable to us than that of ascending to them with our hearts, and conversing with them with our lips in praise and prayer? What misery could be more afflicting than an exclusion from it? You say well, my poor old friend, that your own condition, more especially, would be one of darkness and desolation indeed."

"Yes, Sir," she replied, with animation; "but now enjoying the inestimable privilege of approaching the city of God, which is above, with my thoughts, my affections, and my voice; and knowing, besides, that he graciously listens to me, and accepts even my poor endeavours whenever I am thus employed; at such moments darkness and desolation exist no longer; I am transported into a kingdom streaming with light, which needs no suns to repair it, and peopled

with innumerable multitudes of blissful, glorious beings, clothed in white garments, with palms of victory in their hands; I hear their delicious music, and I catch the sublime chorus of their song—*Salvation unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever! Amen! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and strength, be unto our God, for ever and ever!*—Thus ‘my heart is fixed,’ as the sweet songster of Israel says, ‘my heart is fixed;’ and I too, here on earth, begin to ‘sing, and give praise, with the best member that I have,’ and join my feeble unharmonious accents to the millions upon millions of angelical heaven-taught quires. Old and indigent, blind and palsied, I forget it all; I chant the strains of the king-musician, which came to him by inspiration from above, and I leave the sorrows of earth below me. In this mood, there are many parts of his divine psalms, and some whole ones, which raise and sustain the wings of my devotion. There are the 34th and the 103d, and three in succession, beginning with the 145th, which are deeply engraven on my memory, and I often repeat them, accurately I believe, word after word, with my mouth. Whose heart does not burn within him, when he thinks of such noble passages, and tries to stir up his voice to give them utterance in song? There is something in

them suited to every condition of mankind, young or old, rich or poor, prosperous or calamitous; they carry us all into the presence of God, and cheer us with the sight of his perfections and his glory."

This was excellent; and I said immediately, "What a summing up of all misery then would it be to the old, the poor, and the calamitous, to be bereaved of this resource! But still they must have made great proficiency in religious feeling, as well as knowledge, to be able to avail themselves of it. I admire their faith, their trust, and their love. They do not see, and yet they believe. Affliction and the scourge do not shake their reliance or diminish their gratitude; out of the midst of thick dark clouds there springeth up to them a clear light to guide and comfort them on their way; they are smitten, and they bless. This is the perfection of religion; further than this no man can go. But, my good old friend, the psalms are useful to you, I presume, as prayers, when prayer succeeds to praise, or leads the way to it. They abound, as well as the rest of the Scriptures, in both; and, no doubt, you have treasured up in your memory noble specimens of both."

"Yes, Sir," she answered; "but there are few psalms, or scarcely one perhaps, which is in the form of prayer throughout; and there are many things, especially about enemies and persecutors,

not suitable to *our* circumstances, in most of those psalms which contain the devoutest supplications to God. Yet the spirit which they breathe may be caught by another, I hope, Sir. The 31st very often engages my meditations, and flows from my tongue: many of its verses seem to have been composed on purpose for me. But distress, Sir, and the consciousness of unworthiness, and looking up to God for relief, will always dictate, I suppose, similar thoughts, if not the same language. Truly, in moments of depression, I can pray with the Psalmist, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble, and mine eye is consumed for very heaviness; yea, my soul and my body. For my life is waxen old with heaviness, and my years with mourning. My strength faileth me because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.' Then I can rise again, like *him*, and exclaim, 'My hope hath been in *thee*, O Lord; I have said, thou art my God! My time is in *thy* hand. Thanks be to the Lord! O, how plentiful is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for *them* that fear thee, and prepared for *them* that put their trust in thee!' Thus does prayer soon conduct me to praise, Sir; and I intermingle the one with the other. But I sum up all, Sir, thus, 'as my blessed Saviour did: 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth!' The 71st Psalm, too,

Sir, is full of matter which I apply to myself, and which ends in praise; so also are the seventy-seventh, the eighty-sixth, and the one hundred and thirtieth. There are single verses innumerable, scattered here and there, which are scarcely ever out of my mind; which keep me almost constantly in the temper of prayer; and which very often break forth from my lips, and ascend for me, I trust, to the mercy-seat above."

"Never doubt it," I said with confidence; "they go up there with a sweet-smelling savour, like the fragrance of the sacrifices of old. And there is one always ready to receive them, the great Mediator between God and man, who presents them to his Father with all the enforcements of a gracious and mighty Redeemer; one who died for us, and now ever liveth to make intercession for us. Wonderful, wonderful, and irresistible, must be the influence of such a Mediator and Intercessor, in making our prayers acceptable to God! But if infirmity clings to us in our prayers, as it does in everything, there is another helper, even the Holy Spirit, who teaches us how to pray, who fans the flame of our devotion, and himself makes intercession for us, as it is said, 'with groanings that cannot be uttered.' "

"Aye, Sir," she interposed with quickness, "what is *that*? what are the groanings that cannot be uttered? Is the Holy Spirit interested

and affected for us in such a degree, when we are in distress, and do not know how to pray, that his intercessions are so earnest and importunate as to be accompanied with groanings, which St. Paul was incapable of expressing in human language? The merciful Beings in Heaven, although dwelling in so high and holy a place, and inhabiting eternity, condescend to rejoice over *us*, poor low mortals, on earth; *that we know*; is it to be supposed that they grieve too, and that their grief breaks out so forcibly as with groans?"

"The translation, as I was going to show you, is not quite correct," I said. "The groanings are not such as *cannot* be uttered, but such as are *not* uttered; not *unutterable*, but *unuttered*. And they are not the groanings of the Spirit, but our own; such as in our sorrows and distresses work silently in our breasts; such as we suppress there without utterance, aspiring upwards to God, but not knowing what petitions to send up to him, whether to be released from our sufferings altogether, or to be endued with a more submissive patience to bear them. This is an infirmity in which the Spirit sympathises with us; in these internal, unuttered desires, devout breathings, and suppressed sorrows of ours, he is the worker, and is actually transacting our great business with God for us. I would translate the passage thus: 'In our unuttered groanings the Spirit himself is exercising

his influence for us.' I would not say that the Spirit intercedes for us, lest the intercession of the Spirit should be confounded with the intercession of Jesus Christ. However, when the Spirit is thus employed, exercising his influence and transacting our business for us, God accepts our secret unuttered groanings, as well as our loudest ejaculations when we cry 'Abba, Father,' and crowns them with his mercy."

"Oh! thank you, good Sir, for your explanation of this text; thank you a thousand times!" she replied. "If the groanings are ours, it applies to my own circumstances very frequently. Depression of spirits will too often steal over me for short periods, and then I do not know what to pray for as I ought. My heart is troubled within me, and I am agitated by various conflicting desires, which come after one another in quick succession, and which I do not attempt to express in words, for the very reason that I am ignorant what may be most pleasing to God. But now you have comforted me greatly, Sir; for I perceive that such a state of infirmity is one which the Holy Spirit will help, and that my unuttered groanings hitherto directed as they were to Heaven, have betokened his gracious influence upon me. But such a state soon vanishes, Sir, by his aid, and ends in actual prayer for humility, contentment, and resignation. Then I am relieved; no transient, undefined, indistinct

breathings of the soul are so comfortable as specific, actual prayer."

To bring Mrs. Brown's ideas within a shorter compass, I have put words into her mouth which she did not really use. She expressed herself very well always—(for she had been constantly improving upon a respectable education)—and sometimes, perhaps, much better than I have done for her; but wishing to save myself trouble, and not always recollecting exactly what her expressions were, whenever a single word of my own, like undefined, actual and specific, would embrace all that she meant by a whole sentence, I have adopted the single word without hesitation. Between us, I trust, we have sufficiently opened this difficult passage to the unlearned or unenquiring readers of Scripture. As for herself, she caught the spirit of my interpretation at once; she illustrated it by her own experience; she applied it to her own comfort; and she extended the use of it beyond its own simple sense. I was very much pleased, of course, and said, "I am truly glad to have administered even this little comfort to you, my good old friend, and to perceive how much you profit immediately by the right understanding of Scripture. That excellent creature, who is so kind to you in taking you to church, Mrs. Wilson the almswoman, has learnt this habit, I believe, from *you*; so you may reckon that you have repaid her

well for her humanity. And now that she is in my thoughts, I will tell you a short story of her, which will delight you, I know, and which is besides very much to our present purpose."

She was all attention, and by her countenance anticipated some great pleasure for herself in the commendation of her aged friend; so I continued thus: "I have been for some time in attendance upon Mrs. Wilson's neighbour. They live in two adjoining corners of the almshouses, and have their doors close to each other. One day, when I came out rather in a hurry from praying with Mrs. White, just glancing my eye towards Mrs. Wilson's door, I saw her on her knees upon her own threshold, with her two hands clasped in the devout attitude of prayer; and I understand now, that she never fails to accompany me, in my prayers for Mrs. White, in the same manner. Truly, when I beheld her face, I thought that her Heaven was already begun upon earth; at least a beam from Heaven illumined it."

This filled Mrs. Brown's poor eyes brim-full with tears, and she made no attempt to speak. Neither had I myself attempted it, when I first saw the fact; I was touched to the quick, and passed hastily by. On a subsequent opportunity I collected courage enough to go to her, and to help her to rise.

After a pause, I said to Mrs. Brown, quitting

the chair, “we will now pray with Mrs. Wilkinson, if you please.” “I wish I could kneel, Sir,” she answered mournfully ; “but I hope you will excuse it. I hope God will excuse it, as it is very painful to me to do it. I thank him heartily, that I am able to do it at the altar, for the few minutes of the administration of the sacred body and blood of my Saviour.”

Thus it appeared, that no little blessing passed unobserved by her, or without her pious gratitude. She marked and acknowledged everything. “Certainly,” I replied, “this is a case in which God will accept the will for the deed ; and why should *I* determine otherwise ? Sit still ; I will kneel by the bed-side, and endeavour to make myself heard.” “I will desire somebody,” she said, “to move my chair up to you, Sir, and then I shall hear you very well without fatiguing you so much. I fear I have sadly fatigued you already, Sir.” “Do not be uneasy about it,” I replied ; “God will bless us all, in his great mercy, I hope, for this short hour spent in talking of his glory and worship.”

“Amen !” she said fervently ; and upon this a young woman, who had just entered the chamber, raised her from her arm-chair, and reseated her in it again, close to Mrs. Wilkinson and myself. Then I began with the exhortation to the sick, and proceeded, as in other cases, with a psalm, and two or three prayers. At last I gave them the benediction and departed.

CHAPTER V.

THE CATECHUMENS.—CONFIRMATION.

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§ 1. SCHOOLS.

THE bishop of the diocese, according to custom, having appointed a time and place for the celebration of this sacred and important rite of our church, due notice of his intention was given, at morning and afternoon services, on the first Sunday after his letter was received ; and it was announced also, that myself and my curate would preach twice or thrice upon the subject, before we admitted the candidates, generally, to be examined by us, as to the fact of their possessing the requisite qualifications, or not. Meanwhile, however, I visited all the schools in my parish, where there were likely to be young persons of the fit age, and properly prepared for the ceremony, without the necessity of any regular instructions on my part ; and in the cases of schools conducted by respectable clergymen, in whom I placed an entire confidence, I left the examination to the clergymen themselves, and

authorised them to sign tickets of approval, which were afterwards to be countersigned by myself, before they were presented to the bishop. In other cases, where the schools were conducted by ladies, or by persons not in orders, yet if I found, upon putting a few questions, that there was no appearance of any neglect on the part of the teachers, or defect of knowledge in the catechumens, I contented myself with endeavouring to enforce what had been done, and to make an impression upon their hearts. I will here give a sketch of what I usually said on these occasions, the young people being assembled and standing before me, whilst I was seated myself, and addressed them with a sort of paternal tone from my chair.

“ My young friends,” I thus sometimes began, “ you appear to *me* to be well acquainted with your catechism, and to know already, by the care of your teachers, both the meaning and the importance of the sacred ceremony which is about to be performed, and in which you are yourselves most deeply interested. I am not going, therefore, to trouble you with any further questions, or to waste time in explaining over again, what you seem to understand even now, clearly, and I hope sufficiently. But there are some matters, intimately connected with this subject, and most worthy of serious and solemn reflection, which will come better perhaps from *me* than from any other person,

and which require to be enforced by all the spiritual authority of one, whom the laws of our holy church have set over you to watch for the eternal welfare of your souls. Listen, therefore, my good young people, as you appear disposed to do, whilst I speak to you, not simply as a teacher, or as a parent, but as a minister of Christ, and as your own minister."

If they were young ladies, to whom I was addressing myself, this mode of opening the subject seemed always to produce a great effect upon them, and some of them began to shed tears immediately. The difference, indeed, between *them* and boys was striking enough; whether it were, that the mistresses of schools took more pains with their pupils than the masters did, both in respect to religion, and in the great points of behaviour; or, which is very probable, that there is something in the female nature, disposing it to a more cordial reception, and a more tender and lively feeling of religious truth, as well as to every external order and decency of life. Be this, however, as it may; the young ladies always appeared to be fearfully and tremblingly alive to their situation, and they were soon affected even to tears; whilst at the same time there was a simplicity and modesty about them, and a proper respectfulness towards *me* which were extremely pleasing, and could not but engage my regard and esteem. The boys, on

the other hand, with exceptions, no doubt, were too often bold and confident, though with less knowledge; they were very little awed by my presence, until they had compelled me to rebuke them with severity; they came, apparently, without any due sense of what they were about to undertake; it was in their eye, most probably, a mere form, without any useful end in view, to which it was necessary, however, by the constitutions of the church, that all indiscriminately should submit; the only thing, therefore, that seemed to keep them in any tolerable degree of order was, the danger of a rejection, and a fear of the shame that would follow it; yet they brought so much levity with them, that the slightest mistake of one of their companions in answering a question, produced a titter immediately, or even a downright laugh, throughout the whole band. To such persons, as will presently be seen, I spoke in a different language and with a different temper; but I will now proceed with my young ladies, whom the affectionate tone and earnestness of my first few sentences impressed with a still more sacred feeling of the rite for which they were preparing, and with a still greater desire to hear the rest of my intended address to them.

“ You are now going then,” I thus continued, “ to complete your baptism; you are going to show, publicly, that you approve of what was done

for you in your infant state ; you are going to acknowledge, by a deliberate and most binding vow, that you are indeed responsible in your own persons for the whole of your future conduct ; that it shall be regulated, in every instance, by the fear of God, and by faith in the Gospel of his Son ; and that it shall be worthy of those inestimable privileges, to which your baptism alone entitles you, of being the adopted children of a gracious Almighty Father, the redeemed servants of a most merciful Lord and Saviour, and heirs and co-heirs together with him of the blissful and glorious kingdom of heaven. This is what you are going to do ; this is the meaning of the answer, which the appointed service directs you to make to a question proposed by the venerable minister of Christ who presides over the ceremony. He will invite you to tell him whether you come there to renew, to ratify, and to confirm, the promises which were given in your name at your baptism ; and to acknowledge yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you ; and to this awfully-important and interesting question each of you, individually, will answer, ‘ I do.’ Ah ! my good young friends, these are but two words ; very short words also, and therefore very soon pronounced ; but I hope they will sound for ever in your ears, and that the recollection of them will be fixed deeply and indelibly in your hearts. The things implied by

them are of the utmost moment to your present and everlasting welfare."

Here I paused for an instant or two, that my gentle and amiable catechumens might collect their strength, and compose their minds a little, which I found to be often necessary, before I entered upon the detail of their duties, as I intended to do in my next sentences. Besides, the sight of so much devout and lively feeling in *them* reacted upon myself, and I was in danger perpetually of being carried away by the same stream, and disqualified for the performance of my office; but a momentary stop, now and then, relieved the growing embarrassment of both parties, and restored us all to the full possession of our faculties.

I went on thus—"Consider," I said; "when you pronounce those two short words, 'I do,' you solemnly promise to believe all the articles of the Christian faith which you have learnt in your catechism or Scripture; and whatever duties the same catechism or Scripture have taught you, both towards God, and towards your fellow-creatures, and towards yourselves, all these, when you say, 'I do,' you solemnly promise to perform. What an awful business then it is that you are about to undertake! Your belief in all the articles of the Christian faith, if it is to be such a belief as may influence your whole life, and be a powerful motive to every action, and an effectual consolation to you in every trouble, what constant study will

it require of the Holy Scriptures to bring it to perfection ; how much reading of pious books besides ; how much private meditation in your own breasts ; how much fervent prayer, both public and private, to fetch down grace from above to help your unbelief ; to open your understandings and to touch your hearts ! For it is only with your hearts that you can believe in such an efficacious manner as to make your belief the foundation of a holy life. Then again, as to the duties which you owe to God, and your fellow-creatures, and yourselves, only remember what they are ; how various, how extensive ! God must be loved, and feared, and worshipped, and served, and obeyed, in every possible way, and with every faculty that you have ; with your whole mind, and with your whole soul ; and your fellow-creatures you must love as you love yourselves. This one precept embraces almost all moral virtue amongst men. If you love your fellow-creatures as yourselves, you will never hurt anybody by word or deed ; nor will you bear any hatred or malice against anybody in your hearts ; nor will you ever envy anybody on account of any superior advantages which they may possess ; nor will you ever desire or covet anything which is not your own. But there are virtues also which respect yourselves chiefly, although the practice and the neglect of them may affect your fellow-creatures too, by the immediate

acts, or by the example, or by both. I mean the virtues which your catechism mentions, of temperance, soberness, and chastity in your own persons; essential and beautiful virtues in all; but in women of your rank the absence of them is a defect so glaringly unfeminine and indelicate, as well as disgraceful and sinful, that it can never be excused. They are some of your loveliest ornaments, but nobody will praise you for them, because all expect to see them about you, just the same as if they were a part of your very nature itself; yet, it must be allowed, that young women, in a humbler rank, might be thrown into situations, in which the perfect exercise of all those virtues would be attended with some difficulties; but by the dispensations of Providence *you* are removed out of the way of the worst temptations to which *they* are liable; and if, therefore, by a blameable carelessness and inattention to your own conduct, or by not holding every wrong inclination under a steady perpetual check, you should yield to any inferior temptation, your sin would be so much the greater; you would tarnish, with a deeper and a more just reproach, the true lustre and glory of your own sex. You should always wear the pure robe of spotless white; the least deviation from strict propriety will cast a stain upon it; and, in short, instead of being what God and nature intended you to be, objects of esteem and love to the

other sex, you would be objects, alas! of their scorn and hatred. Every virtuous person, indeed, of both sexes would turn from you with abhorrence. Remember all this then, more especially, when you say 'I do.'

After an admonition of this kind, a longer pause was always expedient, to give them time for reflection and self-possession; and I could have no doubt that their youthful hearts, uncontaminated as yet by any mixture with the world, swelled with every right idea, and with the strongest and sincerest resolves of practising all piety, and all virtue. If, in spite of the corruption of our nature, there be still some moral sense engrafted upon it, formed as it was in the similitude of God, these young persons had it yet in all its fineness, acuteness, and delicacy; nothing had yet occurred to take off its edge, and to blunt it, as too soon happens, imperceptibly, when we begin to engage in worldly affairs; on the contrary indeed, the principles which were constantly instilled into their minds, the books which they daily read abounding with noble examples, the praise or blame which immediately followed whatever was right or wrong in their behaviour, and the almost total absence of inducements to evil, gave that edge an additional keenness, and made them more alive to every good sentiment, and more susceptible of every virtuous impression. So at least it seemed, and the latter part of what I said, more particularly, in almost all

cases, produced a stream of tears ; and on some occasions there were young people who even sobbed aloud. But the effect, it should be observed, of the same things was very rarely the same upon single persons, however well brought up, or rightly disposed. They could not indeed be spoken precisely in the same manner to one and to many. The authority of the speaker would be the same, but his tone would needs be different. He too might catch a spark from numbers, as numbers do one from another. I mention this, lest the young clergyman should be discouraged, and tempted to accuse himself of inefficiency, when, after propounding the gravest and most awful matters, he still sees his catechumen dry-eyed, and apparently unmoved and tranquil. He may have conveyed the adequate instruction, and made a deep impression ; but many circumstances must concur, and he himself perhaps must wait for honoured years, before he should expect to produce any remarkable external tokens of it.

I now went on again. “ See then, beforehand, my good young people, what an awful obligation you are going to lay upon yourselves ; and when you have reflected upon it sufficiently, next consider in what an awful manner you will do it. The circumstances, indeed, cannot but be most striking and most awful to you. You will stand in the house of the great God himself, and in his more immediate presence ; he will be the witness of

your behaviour, and the judge of your most secret thoughts and intentions ; to *him* your vows will be made, and I think you will scarcely make them without some fear and trembling. Then again, you will be surrounded by great numbers of young people, of the same age with yourselves, and all assembled for the same purpose and to enter into the same engagements ; and the idea will surely come into your minds, and create a painful sensation, that too many of them perchance, although instructed as you have been, and candidates for heaven equally with *you*, may fall, nevertheless, and miss the glorious prize. Whilst you look around, therefore, upon these interesting objects, you will utter, I doubt not, or conceive silently in your own breasts, many an anxious prayer for *them* as well as for yourselves. They will, perhaps, at the same instant, be troubled with the same fear for *you*, and will offer up the same prayer. Will not this expel all gaiety and levity from your countenances and your hearts ? What but seriousness, gravity, and awe, can fix themselves there, even young as you are, and disposed as you may be by your youth to gladness and joy ? But again, you will be accompanied, most probably, some of you, by your parents, some of you by your teachers ; and you will not forget for a moment, I presume, that their watchful and anxious eye will be upon you during the sacred ceremony, and that they will be think-

ing perpetually with a lively concern, whether you will attend or not to their wise instructions and tender admonitions. As to your parents, indeed, they gave you your very existence and being; and God has linked you to them by the nearest and dearest tie. But in giving you being, they gave you at the same time a corrupted nature, which exposes you to the danger of eternal misery. To correct this nature, and to make you capable of eternal happiness, has engaged, perhaps, their constant cares; and at this critical moment, when you are to act for yourselves, and to show what is likely to be the effect of those cares, they *must* feel an uncommon and even a painful interest; but will not *you* also on your parts feel an equal interest in the sincere resolve, which you will be prompted to make, of corresponding to all their wishes, and all their prayers?"

I paused here again; for this sentiment always seemed to come home to their bosoms with a great force, and to affect them deeply. And, if I was not mistaken in my conjecture, the children of negligent and thoughtless parents, who were conscious that none of these cares had been bestowed upon them, were affected with what I had said, equally with their more fortunate companions, although in a different view; for they yielded, I thought, implicitly to my authority, and would naturally therefore both silently accuse their pa-

rents themselves, and fearfully bewail the omission of a duty so awful as even to threaten, on account of that omission, the eternal safety of persons most intimately dear to them.

After a while I resumed in this manner. "And there are other persons whose presence at the sacred ceremony will show you what serious ideas you ought to entertain of it. You will see many clergymen assembled, who have the charge of men's souls, and especially your own, who have the charge of yours. For myself, you know, I have been constantly preaching to you the doctrines and duties of our holy religion; and it must needs be an anxious moment to me when you come to declare, for the first time, in so public a manner, that you embrace them all for the rule of your conduct, and the foundation of your hopes, both here and hereafter. Assure yourselves that I am warmly interested in the destiny of those whom I consider to be my own children in the Lord; and when I observe you approaching the altar, with the looks and the steps of persons aware of the new and awful condition in which they are about to place themselves, it will be no light proof to me that I have preached to your understandings and your hearts. And I trust I may well expect to receive from you this pleasing testimony to my labours, and that you yourselves will be gratified with giving it, and will think

reverently both of me and of my sacred office, which I endeavour to discharge for your good. But every clergyman whom you will see there will be affected, no doubt, in the same manner, for his own peculiar flock ; and therefore I may well expect, still further, that from the countenance of every minister of Christ you will catch a sacred spark of religious feeling, which will kindle an additional unwonted seriousness and awe in your own breasts.

“ But, more than all, you will see there, standing at the holy altar to receive you, robed in the emblems of sanctity, one of the chief shepherds and bishops of our church ; one who represents the office of the great inspired Apostles themselves. It was they who first administered this sacred rite of confirmation ; it is *he* who administers it now, because it is he alone who now stands in their place. You were baptized by one who holds an inferior rank in the church of Christ ; the highest of all, under the great Shepherd himself, alone lays his hands upon your heads, and invokes the effusion of the Spirit upon your hearts.

“ Remember, my dear young friends, remember, I beseech you, as long as you live, this most solemn, this most affectionate act of the bishop ; and whenever you are in danger of falling hereafter in any of the slippery paths of the world, recur to it always in your secret thoughts ; and, roused and

animated by the recollection of it, collect your failing strength, re-establish your wavering resolutions, and stand upright, firm, and unshaken. It is no idle, unmeaning, ineffectual ceremony, I hope; it *may* be, it *should* be, as strengthening and salutary as it is striking and affecting. The Apostles laid their hands upon the heads of the new Christians after their baptism, and immediately the Holy Ghost descended upon them; the most astonishing effects were visible, and extraordinary graces openly conferred. The bishop, in imitation of *them*, will lay his hands upon *your* heads, and, whilst he does it, will pray to God in the most earnest and persuasive terms, not that the Holy Ghost may descend upon you visibly in cloven tongues of fire, and endue you, all at once, with the miraculous power of speaking all the languages of the whole world (a power which you do not want), but that he may make his silent and gentle illapses into your hearts, and dwell there perpetually, as in his own pure temple, and exercise in an abundant measure his spiritual influence and assistance for your daily guidance and your everlasting welfare. This is what you do indeed want; without his ordinary aid you can do nothing effectual for yourselves and your own salvation, but with it you may do everything which is necessary; and this is what I trust the bishop will procure for you by the laying on of his hands, and by

his prayers. It was first bestowed upon you at your baptism; you were baptized, not with water only, but with the Holy Ghost also; and you may now reasonably hope for a new effusion of his power to fortify and purify you in the spirit of your minds, and to help you forward more effectually in the right way that leadeth to eternal life. I may well presume, therefore, that you will neither suffer this solemn and affectionate act of the bishop to be thrown away upon you now, nor that you will ever forget it hereafter."

Most of the young ladies were in tears during this portion of my address to them, and some ~~went~~ abundantly. I gave them time as before, and then proceeded thus. "But, indeed," I said, "I must remind you, that it is not once or twice you will stand in need of the communications of the Holy Spirit: you will stand in need of them always; and therefore you must put yourselves in the way of receiving fresh accessions of them as often as you can. Now, we are assured that we are in favourable circumstances for such communications whenever we are engaged in the celebration of any of the divine ordinances, but more especially when we are partaking of the sacrament of our Lord's Supper, and eating and drinking at his table. For we never go to that holy table without some wholesome preparation of the mind. It is then that we are peculiarly conscious of our own

unworthiness in the sight of God, and lament it with a deeper and more unfeigned sorrow ; it is then that we feel a peculiar sense of gratitude working within us, and binding us more closely to our blessed Redeemer, for the great things which he has done for us ; it is then that we make stronger and sincerer resolutions of devoting ourselves entirely to his will ; the solemn service itself, besides, and the prayers that we utter there, and the sight of the sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood, all conspire to raise us to such a frame and temper of soul, as qualifies us most admirably for the reception and operations of the Holy Spirit. But you yourselves will now be entitled to the blessed privilege of this holy communion with our Lord and Saviour ; it is a privilege which you acquire immediately by your confirmation, and for which, therefore, you must value your confirmation so much the more. I exhort you then, on every account, not to neglect the use and enjoyment of this privilege at any opportunity which may occur ; but, more especially, not at the first. Lose not, I beseech you, a single moment to show your earnest desire of seizing upon every advantage which your confirmation offers to you, and your deep and lively sense of the gracious covenant between yourselves and your God, which was sealed by your Redeemer's blood, and is commemorated in this sacrament."

Here I paused again for an instant, for the usual reasons ; and then, considering that it was likely to be striking to these young people, I concluded this branch of my subject in the following manner. “ But I must remind you,” I said solemnly, “ of another most important thing besides ; that, as it was by baptism you were initiated into the Christian covenant, by the will of others, and without any consent of your own ; and as it is by confirmation you declare, of your own free will, and by your own consent, your acceptance of that covenant ; so it is by partaking of the holy communion of Christ’s body and blood, you show openly to the world, and prove to the secret inward approbation of your own consciences, that you continue stedfastly and immoveably in that covenant, trusting in it, and relying upon it with a firm assurance of faith ; members indeed of Christ, and therefore the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Can I go further than this ? What more powerful reasons can be imagined to induce you to embrace every occasion, as well as the first that presents itself, of going to the holy table of your Lord ; neither prevented from doing so by business or pleasure, nor deterred by any undue sentiment of false shame, nor yielding at all to the corrupt or lukewarm manners and customs of the world around you ? ”

This seemed to make a great impression upon them ; and I have no doubt, that they formed at the time the strongest resolutions of complying with my admonition. But, alas ! some of them would find, too probably, in the very circle of their own families, either a bad example or an insuperable obstacle,—thoughtless, or superstitious, or wicked parents. But I did not think it proper to say this upon the present occasion ; I reserved the topic for the pulpit, where I could handle it with all its force, and perhaps in the presence of the parents themselves whom I might wish to warn and instruct. I went on in this manner. “ My good young friends, if you go to your confirmation with these feelings, intentions, and resolves, I am sure that God will bless the ceremony to you, and that you will derive from this holy ordinance the greatest possible advantages, both at the time and hereafter. It is painful to me to imagine the contrary ; but, alas ! I have seen it. I have seen, (and *sorry* I am to say it, except that I say it for *your* good,) I have seen a strange, thoughtless, indecorous levity in the whole air and manner, in every gesture and in every look of some unhappy young persons, (I may well call them unhappy !) who knelt at the holy altar to receive the imposition of the bishop’s hands, evidently without one feeling, one intention, one resolve, correspondent to the sacred rite and the interesting and im-

portant circumstances in which they were placed. Of such persons what would you expect to hear in their subsequent lives, but a succession of follies and sins, sins and follies, instead of the performance of the most solemn vows, most solemnly recalled to their recollection, and taken upon themselves in the presence of the congregation, and in the house of God himself? They violate those vows, you will readily suppose, and all their most sacred engagements; and then every act and ceremony of confirmation, which should have been a comfort and an encouragement to them, becomes an aggravation of their sin, and a heavier condemnation. By their behaviour they did despite to the spirit of grace; and, therefore, the very act which should have conveyed it to them, was not only nugatory and useless, but conveyed, it is to be feared, the first tokens of reprobation, rejection, and judgment."

If my ingenuous Catechumens were now deeply affected, as they generally were, at this terrible description, some of them perhaps fearing that it was pointed at themselves, I consoled them thus, being satisfied that I had put them sufficiently on their guard:—"My good young friends, I am pleased to observe so many marks of right feeling in you; it enhances the high opinion which I have been led to form of the excellent instruction and correct religious principles instilled into your

minds and hearts. They who grieve so much that others should profane this sacred rite will never profane it themselves. I have no such suspicion of *you*; and I will now dismiss you with my best wishes for your welfare. I have done; except it be to entreat you most earnestly to weigh well all that I have said to you. You are of an age now fully to be aware that there are two ways of life open before you, and that you must choose one of them. You cannot walk in both these ways, as you cannot serve two masters who require contradictory things from you. But mark the two ways: the one is broad and easy, and apparently delightful; strewed with flowers, abounding with pleasures, and therefore much frequented; in fact, the world, the great mass of mankind, travel along it; but, alas! it leads, nevertheless, inevitably and directly, to ruin, and misery, and everlasting death. Avoid it, I beseech you, and seek the other, although narrow, and difficult, and arduous, and unfrequented. Few, indeed, there are who travel in it; but those few are the elect children of God. Be ye amongst the number of those few, I beseech you; for this road will assuredly conduct you to safety, and peace, and joy, and everlasting life."

When I had concluded with a peroration of this kind, I immediately rose and bowed to them, as a signal to depart, which very few ever did with a

dry eye. Those who had been unmoved before were always moved now by my good wishes and admonitions in the end. In fact, the trouble which I gave myself appeared to be very well bestowed; at least when I saw these same persons at the confirmation, there was every mark on their countenances that the proper feelings had taken possession of their hearts.

But I turn now to the boys, and take a specimen of those who came before me with a bold and confident air, and with all the other bad qualities and dispositions which I have already mentioned. A single glance at them, as they entered, generally showed me the line which it might be proper for me to pursue. "I should fear, young gentlemen," thus I began with them, assuming at once a serious tone, and even contracting my brow a little; "I should fear that you are scarcely aware of the importance of this ceremony, for which I suppose, nevertheless, by your appearance before *me*, that you are desirous of being prepared. Yet you are not so young, as it should seem, but that you might understand the importance of it sufficiently well, and also be deeply interested about it. It surprises me greatly, therefore, to observe so little seriousness and gravity in your looks and deportment, when you are employed upon a matter so serious and grave in itself, and when you are about to be examined by one of God's ministers,

your own minister too, as to your fitness for the ceremony."

This sort of reception of course produced some marks of wonder in their faces, but not perhaps the steady sober look of reflection which would have been suitable to the circumstances. They came, expecting to be asked a question or two in the Catechism, which they did not doubt of their ability to answer; but to be taken to task, and lectured for any part of their behaviour, was the farthest thing from their ideas imaginable. They considered *me*, as well as themselves, engaged in a mere business of form, which I should probably make as short as possible. If I did not think them therefore to be yet in the proper temper, I often proceeded thus.

" Young gentlemen, if there be anything in this world solemn and momentous; anything to make us fear and tremble, when we recollect it; I should have been quite sure that a covenant with God must be such a thing. Is it possible that the idea of a covenant with God can come into the mind without filling it with awe and alarm; with awe of *him* who is almighty to destroy as well as to save, and with alarm for ourselves, lest we might fail of performing the conditions which this covenant requires? And now *you* are going to ratify such a covenant in your own persons; so that it is hardly credible that it

should be out of your thoughts. Yet, if I might judge by the way in which you entered the room, it is a matter of mirth to you, rather than of awe or fear. Why, in some cases, when we enter into covenants with our fellow men, we tremble for the event, and therefore bind ourselves with no small degree of apprehension ; and shall we be fearless and careless, when we bind ourselves to the great God of the universe, who can annihilate us all in a moment, if we provoke him to anger ? The bishop, indeed, who will bind you by your own answer to his question, is himself but a man ; yet, if you break the bond, I warn you that you will not lie unto men, but unto God.”

By this time some of my Catechumens usually began to show signs of contrition in their countenances ; but others appearing still thoughtless and insensible, I sometimes resumed thus. “ Reflect besides, I entreat you, upon the object of this awful covenant, and who it was that sealed it and ratified it for you. Why, the object of it is no less than the salvation of your own souls from eternal misery, and it was the Son of God himself who absolutely shed his own blood, for *your* sakes, to obtain the covenant, and to confirm it, and to place *you* within the pale of it. Is anything of more value to you than your souls ? Do you not shudder when you even think of the possibility that everlasting punishment and woe may be their

destiny? Do you consider it to be nothing that a personage of so exalted a dignity and power should have debased himself, as he did, to so low an estate, and to such an ignominious death upon the cross; and all this on account of sin, that God's wrath against it may be appeased, and that we, who are sinners, should be spared the punishment which sin deserves? If you had any just conception of these things, it would astonish me, if care and even dismay were not marked upon your countenances, instead of mirth or levity; I am sure, care and dismay should be in your hearts."

After this, the whole band were now generally reduced to order; but it might be useful, I sometimes thought, to bring the ringleaders into some personal disgrace, and in such cases I questioned them as to the meaning of certain parts of the catechism, and soon convinced them that they knew no more than the mere letter. Indeed it happened now and then that they could not repeat the catechism, even by the letter; and when they failed, I know not which mortified them most, the laugh of their companions, or the rebuke which they had from *me*. "This is what I have always observed," I said, with seriousness, "that ignorance, and carelessness, and ill behaviour are apt to go together. You see that even the oldest boy amongst you does not even know his catechism

by heart; much less does he understand it; and what the feelings of you all are, or were at least a few minutes ago, is too manifest. It is impossible for me, therefore, under such circumstances, to sign certificates of approbation, and thus to send you to the bishop. On the contrary, I disapprove in the strongest manner, and think you at present quite unfit for confirmation."

Upon saying this I rose from my chair, and left them by themselves to make the best of it, in no small astonishment and alarm. But the matter never ended here. On the same day, or the next, I had a communication with the master of the school, and most probably a letter of apology from the culprits themselves. This led to a second interview at my own house, and at length we proceeded amicably to discuss, as with the girls, all the important points of the holy rite. But I was not often very sanguine in thinking that I had done them any permanent good. For the present at least they were abashed, and awed into decency and propriety.

II. § —ELDERLY PERSONS.

A sermon having been now preached on the subject of confirmation, day after day men and women of riper years, and a few pretty far advanced, applied to me as candidates, or for further instruction and advice. I will describe some of the cases that were most striking, not with any vain expectation of being generally interesting, but simply with the hope of being useful to the younger clergy.

The first shall be that of old Mrs. Cox, who was one of the aged devout Annas of my parish; one that was always to be seen at church when the church was open for public worship, and who did not fail to receive the Sacrament whenever it was administered. She was no scholar, as she said herself, not being able even to read; but she had been in good services, and had saved some money, which was carefully deposited in the saving-bank, and not diminished. She drew out the interest only, and kept the capital sacred and untouched for a daughter who had a large family. This was a deed of true generosity, and maternal tenderness; especially as she was compelled, in consequence of her resolution, to live in great poverty herself, and sometimes was put to very hard shifts to get a loaf of bread.

“ Well, my good old friend,” I said, when she

came to me, "what can I do for you to day?" "Dear me! Sir," she answered, with a look of concern, "why I have never been confirmed." "No, indeed?" I said with surprise. "How came that to be? Did you never hear of the ceremony before I preached upon it yesterday?" "Oh! yes Sir," she replied, "I heard about it very often; but when I was young I was always at work and in service; I could not be spared, and nobody would teach me; and since I have been old, and have learnt my religion at church, they told me that I need not be confirmed; but now my mind misgives me about it a little, Sir. I understand better what it means, Sir, and I wish for it." "Do you wish for it?" I asked. "Then I dare say it will be useful to you. But why do you wish for it?" "Why, Sir," she replied earnestly, "I do not know that I am a Christian; I never took the covenant upon myself." "You became a Christian," I said, "by being baptized; you were received into the covenant *then*; you have shown substantially that you have not renounced it since, by your regular attendance at church, and, more particularly, by coming constantly to the altar, to eat and drink there the body and blood of your Saviour." "Yes, yes, Sir," she answered, "I have done all *that*, to be sure; and I hope God will give me grace to do it till my dying day. But still I seem to want some-

thing, Sir. They say my actions will do ; but I shall not be easy till I speak it with my own mouth before God and the church, Sir. Besides, Sir, was it not appointed by the church to be so ? And who am I that I should put myself above the church, and think that I might neglect anything which the church has appointed ? But there is another thing, Sir, more than all. Will not the Holy Ghost be given to me, when the bishop, God bless him ! lays his hands upon my old head ?”

“Indeed,” I said, “it is very likely to be so, if you go with so much good feeling. At the first it was always so, evidently ; for when the Apostles laid their hands upon any man, the Holy Ghost showed himself openly by various signs. But now for many hundreds of years he has ceased to do this, it being no longer necessary ; now he only does what will be necessary always for every one of us ; he puts good thoughts, good desires, good intentions, good resolutions into our hearts, and thus enables us to perform all our duties with the greater ease and satisfaction. When you find this, therefore, you may be sure that the Holy Ghost has been given to you in the only way in which you want his help. But you will be very wise to put yourself as often as you can in the right situations to receive him again and again ; he does not come at random ; 'at least we cannot depend upon anything of that kind ; there are means by which

he conveys himself to us, very various means, no doubt, but the most certain are the holy rites and ceremonies of the church. When you are engaged in any of them with simplicity and sincerity of heart, you may be as sure that he is with you as if you saw him. If this is one of the reasons for your wishing to be confirmed, that you may leave untried none of the usual means of getting more and more grace to live a godly life, and not from any superstitious notion that God will certainly save your soul if you are confirmed, or that the Holy Ghost will be given to you in some extraordinary manner and measure, then I approve of your wish and will enable you to fulfil it. I commend your humbleness of mind too, in thinking that you ought to neglect no ceremony of the church, although it might be intended for a different age from yours. The ceremony may profit every age, and I am sure the feeling which urges you to wish for it will profit *you*, and everybody else who has it. Besides, when you have been confirmed you will no longer have any reason for being dissatisfied with yourself and your condition, on account of any of these things which St. Paul calls the first principles of Christianity; you will have nothing to do in future but to go on unto perfection. Go to the Bishop, therefore, my good old friend, by all means; you will be comforted, and improved too, I have no doubt."

Upon this I wrote out a certificate for her, and was about to dismiss her; but she appeared to linger as if she had something further to say, and at length she asked me whether it was not necessary for her to know the Catechism by heart. "No," I replied, admiring her scruple and treating it with kindness, "it is not necessary for *you*. Indeed, to speak correctly, it is not necessary for anybody to know it by heart; all that is strictly necessary is to understand it, and to have it thoroughly fixed in the mind like all our other most common knowledge. We teach children to say everything by heart, because it is the shortest way of giving them perfect knowledge, and of settling it for ever in their memories. But you have learnt the Catechism, and a great deal more than the Catechism, by your regular habit of coming to church and Sacrament, and by attending to the ministers when you are there. The Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed, you must have heard thousands of times, as they are always read; the Ten Commandments you have heard every Sunday and every Saint's day; the doctrines you hear us preaching upon continually; and as for the duties, my good old friend, you have learnt them in the best possible manner, by practising them.—So go in peace." Thus I sent her away with a light heart and a happy face.

Next came an old man on two crutches, John

Winter, who in religion and morals was the counterpart of the old woman. "Why, John," I exclaimed, as soon as I saw him, "you have been confirmed, surely." "Yes, master," he answered; "but it was so long ago, I should like to have it done over again, if you please." "Confirmation is performed only once," I said; "in that respect it is like baptism. You would not have baptism performed over and over again, John, would you?" He hesitated a little, and then replied rather doubtfully, "Why, Sir, indeed I cannot tell." "Do you know," I asked, "what ceremony there was amongst the Jews, the chief object of which was the same as that of baptism amongst Christians?" "Yes, Sir," he answered, "circumcision." "Do you suppose," I asked again, "that anybody ever thought of such a thing as to circumcise infants, or men a second time?" "No, to be sure, Sir?" he replied, "it was not possible." But if it had been possible," I said, "it would have been quite unnecessary. Circumcision was the sign of their entrance into a covenant with God. As soon as they were circumcised, they were actually in the covenant, and from that moment were entitled to all the benefits and blessings of it. If they had been circumcised forty times afterwards, would that have placed them in a better, or a different situation? Could they have more than the covenant itself, and

the benefits and blessings belonging to it?" "No, Sir, indeed," he answered, "*that* is very plain to me now; but, I was thinking, what would they do, if they lost the covenant." "They could not lose the covenant altogether," I said; "they might break it, and lose the advantages of it, very easily; but the covenant would remain the same; and, whenever they performed the conditions required on their parts, God would perform the conditions graciously promised on his part. There needed no circumcision over again to assure them of this, or to renew the covenant, as if it had been forfeited and lost. On *that* supposition they must have been circumcised afresh every time that they committed a sin, and it would have been an endless matter. No, no; in case of committing sin, they knew very well what they had to do to restore them to God's favour, and to recover the blessings of the covenant; of which covenant they were still members, although unworthy members."

"Thank you, master;" said old John, "I understand it now very well. It is as clear as the sun in a summer's day." "Well then," I resumed, "it is precisely the same with baptism.—Baptism is the sign of the Christian covenant, and, therefore, we are baptised once for all. And confirmation might not unfitly be called a part of baptism. We belong to the covenant, indeed, after baptism, whether we are ever confirmed or not; but as we are

baptised when we are infants, it is very proper for us, when we are old enough to understand the matter, to come forward publicly in our own persons, and declare our acceptance of the covenant, and our desire to perform all the conditions of it. In this sense confirmation completes and finishes baptism. Neither of them, therefore, is to be done twice. Why, my good old man, *that* would be like laying the foundations over and over again, as St. Paul says, instead of going on to the weighty things of the Gospel, righteousness and holiness of life." "Aye, aye, Sir," he answered, "but do you not tell us continually, that we cannot make ourselves righteous and holy without the help of the Spirit; and is not the Spirit given by the laying on of hands? So you see, Sir, it may be a good thing after all to be confirmed again." "Yes, indeed," I said, "if that were the only way of obtaining the help of the Spirit, without which help we can certainly do nothing good of ourselves, then I should probably advise you to be confirmed as often as possible; but as there are many more ways of obtaining it, besides this one way of the laying on of hands, we may leave this alone, according to St. Paul's admonition, and try the others which cannot be repeated too often. There is prayer, private and public; there is the Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood. Depend upon it, the Spirit is close to you always, when you are

doing these holy things ; and the doing them with a sincere piety is the best pledge in the world, that the Spirit already dwells in your heart, and will carry you on, whilst you obey him, from grace to grace. Does this content you, my good old friend ? ” “ It contents me very well, Sir, ” he replied, and prepared his crutches to go. “ Farewell then, ” I said kindly, “ although I refuse your request, because it would not be reasonable to grant it, yet I approve of your conduct in making such a request, and God, I am sure, will bless it to you. He always blesses those, who are as careful as they ought to be, about the one thing needful. This I am fully persuaded, is your case, John. ” The tears glistened in his eyes, when I praised him thus, and he hobbled away without speaking.

My third case is that of a person who had grown gray in his master’s service. He had been for many years the head servant out of livery, and by his upright conduct had gained the confidence of the whole family. But it disturbed his excellent master that he never saw so faithful and correct a man at the Sacrament ; and one day when he pressed him more urgently than usual on the subject, he excused himself by saying, that he had never been confirmed. Upon this an appointment was made with *me*, to see him. I received him accordingly in my study ; and both being seated,

the following conversation ensued between us. Nothing could be more respectable than his appearance, or more proper than his manners ; he was neither assuming nor timid.

“ Mr. Hill,” I said, (for *that* was his name,) “ I am very happy to see you here, and to have the opportunity of talking with you. Mr. Bolton” (*that* was his master’s name) “ speaks of you in the highest terms, and has prepossessed me very much in your favour ; so that I shall be too happy in co-operating with him for your good. And I am greatly pleased with the conduct of Mr. Bolton himself. Many masters, I believe are anxious about the temporal welfare of their servants, if they serve them well ; but not ~~many~~, I fear, look beyond this. Mr. Bolton, however, is more concerned, it seems, about your eternal welfare. He is not satisfied with your becoming rich in his service, so that when old age compels you to quit it, you may be able to spend the remainder of your days in comfort and respectability ; he would have you neglect nothing that might be necessary to qualify you for heaven, and a happy eternity.”

This mode of opening the dialogue appeared to please Mr. Hill exceedingly. He thanked *me*, and thanked Mr. Bolton, and prepared to listen to me with a most respectful and serious attention. I resumed thus—“ I do not know precisely what may be requisite to accomplish Mr. Bolton’s noble

and charitable wish for you ; but of one thing in particular he has informed me, namely, that you have never received the Sacrament. Now I do not pretend to say that a person may not by possibility be saved without receiving the Sacrament ; but still, if a person wilfully refused to receive it when he had abundant opportunities of receiving it,—or if he had scruples about it and took no pains to have his scruples removed,—I should certainly say, that such a person was in a dangerous condition. What Christ himself instituted the night before his crucifixion and death, to keep up the sad but grateful memory of it ; what the Apostles appointed wherever they settled a church, as the sacred badge of Christian profession ; what represents to us that most terrible act itself of the breaking of Christ's body, and the shedding of Christ's blood for the sins of mankind ; for *our* sins, Mr. Hill—for mine and yours ; nay, what he himself seems to consider to be the very eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, and in that view pronounces to be the only pledge of eternal life ; will any wise man imagine, will any man of the very least prudence suppose, that his condition will be none the worse, if he rejects, if he neglects, if he is even indifferent and lukewarm about a matter, which is stamped with characters of such awful, momentous importance ?”

This was quite enough for a man like Mr. Hill.

Immediately he exclaimed, under the evident impression of a stronger conviction than any which had ever before flashed across his mind, “ Oh ! Sir, I beg you will say no more upon so alarming a subject. You have satisfied me entirely. I feel now how blameable I have been for so many years. My conscience condemns me. I see the necessity of a speedy change. But can I receive the Sacrament, Sir, without being confirmed ? If you will overlook *that*, I am ready, Sir.” “ In any other circumstances,” I said, “ I should have been much disposed to overlook it. But the fact is, that, before the next Sacrament-Sunday, there will be a confirmation in the neighbouring parish, for which I am now preparing ~~my~~ own parishioners. If you were lying on a bed of sickness, Mr. Hill, and could not, therefore, attend this confirmation, or safely defer the Sacrament to a later period, I would administer it to you, without making the slightest difficulty. I should be right, I have no doubt, in waving the confirmation, at least for the present. But as you are in full health, and we cannot pretend that there is any obstacle whatever in the way of your being confirmed ; and as the very earliest day of receiving the Sacrament, in the regular course of things, is subsequent to the day of confirmation ; this makes so peculiar a feature in the case, that it seems to be my bounden duty to advise you by all means to

proceed according to the rules of our church. Whilst we are in order, we are sure to go on properly and safely ; when we desert order, and choose a path for ourselves that seems to suit our own convenience, we are always in danger of going astray ; there is a presumption in the thing which it would be well to avoid. The true Christian humbles himself in everything, and never abandons order but when necessity compels him."

Mr. Hill appeared to be struck with this way of stating the question ; but he said, " It will be a strange sight, Sir, to see a man of my age going to be confirmed with a multitude of children ! All eyes will be upon me. I shall be quite ashamed, I am certain. They will point at me and ridicule me, without doubt. I should take it as a great favour, Sir, if you could excuse me." " If I were to assume the power of excusing you," I replied, " hereafter probably you would not excuse yourself. You might perhaps argue justly that it is too late now to call upon you to release your godfathers and godmothers from the responsibility which they undertook on your account, and to profess publicly that you are responsible in your own person ; for that you became so, in point of fact, when you arrived at years of discretion, whether you made any profession of it or not. I will not enter into this nicety ; but I will ask you what

you think as to the other part of the ceremony, the laying on of hands? In the times of the Apostles persons of all ages were baptised; and, as soon as it was convenient afterwards, the Apostles laid their hands upon them. Inferior ministers baptised, the highest of all confirmed; and, without doubt, they did it to many a hoary head. Wonderful indeed was the effect which followed their touch. Do you think that children wanted the Holy Ghost, and the aged not? There may be many other ways of receiving the Holy Ghost, I admit; but this laying on of hands being the primitive way of communicating his influence, and the only way of doing it visibly, I think the neglecting it would not only be a breach of order, but also extremely unwise, and would almost betray the appearance of a defect of faith and of piety; of piety, in not conforming to an apostolical institution; of faith, in seeming to disbelieve that the Holy Ghost is communicated at all, because he is no longer communicated visibly."

Here Mr. Hill interrupted me, and exclaimed, with some degree of warmth, "I should be sorry, Sir, very sorry indeed, to do anything which might bring such an accusation upon me. I hope I shall never be justly liable to it. You have convinced me, Sir, I confess, that I ought to be confirmed, and that the ceremony might be very profitable to me. I am aware too that I shall not

now be satisfied in my own mind, unless I undertake it. But all the difficulties which I mentioned remain, Sir, and still disturb me. What must I do with *them*, Sir? I cannot bear to be a gazing-stock." "How long have you been in this parish?" I inquired. "Not two months," he answered. "Then probably very few people here know you," I said. "None, Sir," he replied, "except three or four tradesmen, whose bills I pay weekly." "Do you know anybody in the neighbouring parish?" I asked, mentioning the name of the place where the confirmation was appointed to be held. "Not a single person, Sir," he answered. "Have you any reason to think," I asked again, "that the tradesmen whom you know here will be present at the ceremony?" "I should think, Sir," he replied, "that they would certainly not be present. I do not know what should take them there." "Then," I said, "it seems most likely that you will be quite unknown to the whole congregation, except to *me*." "It is very true, Sir, indeed," he answered, musing upon the matter, which had not occurred to him before. "Perhaps it would not signify much then," I said, "no, not even the worth of a single hair, if any number of persons who are perfect strangers to you, who neither know your name nor who you are, should gaze at you, and even point at you, and ridicule you."

At this he was silent for a moment, and then

he said, "But it is not pleasant, Sir, to feel that even strangers are fixing their eyes upon us, and making remarks upon our conduct, and wondering to see us where we seem to be out of our proper place." "Have you considered," I asked, "how long these strangers will have the opportunity of looking at you, and wondering, and making their remarks?" "No, Sir," he answered, "I have not considered it at all." "If we were quite sure," I said, "that whenever we stirred abroad we should be beset by strangers, or friends even, who would point at us with their fingers, and laugh us to scorn, it might be a difficult thing to bear, might it not?" "It would, I am very sure," he replied, decisively. "But, if this were to happen to us only once in our lives," I said, "and then only for a few minutes; would it require much courage, do you think, to bear it, being borne up too all along by our own consciences, which assure us that we are doing a right thing? On the contrary, would it not be a most cowardly action to forbear from doing the right thing, because we fear a little transient sense of shame? What! will not the sense of shame be converted into a sense of pride and satisfaction, that we brave ridicule to perform a duty by which God's favour and spiritual help are purchased?" Mr. Hill now blushed deeply, and was speechless. I resumed: "Well then, you will sit in the gallery of the

church, and not be observed at all, most probably ; but if observed, you will perhaps be thought to be the father of the young people who are near you. This is the first step ; next you will be called down, and then you will walk up the middle of the church, and kneel at the altar. During this period, which will last but five minutes at the utmost, you will certainly be observed ; and now the pointing and the remarks will begin, and end too. It is a terrible difficulty to encounter, undoubtedly," I said, sarcastically ; "it is not to be endured : you must stay at home, Mr. Hill, to be sure."

Mr. Hill appeared now to be more and more ashamed, and thoroughly vexed, that he had assigned such poor reasons for evading the ceremony of confirmation, and that he had betrayed so mean a spirit. But still he did not utter a single word either to condemn or to defend himself. So I said, changing my tone, " But now I will tell you, Mr. Hill, what I believe will be the actual occurrence at church. Your age, and your tall erect figure, as you walk up to the altar, contrasted with the youth and more slender stature of those who surround you, (some of whom will appear at least like mere children,) and still more the gravity and solemnity of your deportment, (for, I am sure, it will be such on so grave and solemn an occasion,) will unquestionably attract the attention of

the congregation, and remarks will unquestionably be made ; but they will be made silently in the breasts of the people, and they will be all in your favour, and to commend you. These people will be the parents, the guardians, the teachers, the friends of those who come to be confirmed ; and there will be, besides, the ministers of Christ from the several adjoining parishes, to watch over the behaviour of their respective flocks ; all interested in the holy ceremony, all assembled there with serious thoughts, and full of the importance of the business to be transacted. Such are the persons who will be your spectators, and such will be their temper and feeling at the moment. Without knowing you at all, they will respect you greatly ; they will wish indeed to know you—a man who adopts his Saviour's advice, and humbles himself as a little child ; one who submits himself implicitly to the discipline of the church, and will not proceed to her higher offices but through the lower ; a man who is sensible of his need of spiritual aid, and comes here in faith to seek it, not doubting that the bishop, like the apostles whom he represents, will be enabled to convey it to him by the imposition of his hands. ‘*There* is a man,’ they may say to themselves, ‘ who unfortunately omitted this rite in his youth—whether it was that his parents were negligent of his religion, or that he was entangled so early in the affairs of

this world as to have had no leisure for thinking upon spiritual matters—but he remedies the defect, by his own free choice, in his later years ; he acts wisely in thinking it never too late to retrieve a lost step ; he may have been in the practice of substantial virtue and all honesty of life, but for his own comfort and satisfaction he will leave nothing undone ; to procure the divine blessing he will neglect no divine ordinance.' This will be the temper and tone of their remarks, Mr. Hill. I presume there is nothing in this to deter you from seeking the Holy Spirit in the ceremony of confirmation, although you might be the only elderly person of respectable appearance who may do it."

"Nothing in the world," Mr. Hill replied, very much to my satisfaction, and animated with the view which he now took of the subject ; "nothing in the world, Sir. On the contrary, there is every encouragement to undertake it. I think it will be as you say, Sir ; but if it were quite otherwise, I would not be deterred. If they were to make the most uncharitable remarks upon me, I would hold up my head boldly in spite of them all. My mind is quite fixed and resolved, I assure you, Sir." "I am glad of it," I said ; "but I am confident, you will be put to no trial of any difficulty whatever. Suppose a spectator to form the very worst possible conception of you ; suppose him to think

that you have been immersed in every vice ; that falsehood, dishonesty, and fraud, have been your daily trade, and that you have wallowed in drunkenness and all sensuality ; yet what must be his second thought when he reflects, as he cannot fail to do, that you come where he sees you, to the hallowed dwelling of the great Almighty God, to present yourself before that God himself, to vow a most solemn vow of the utter renunciation of all sin, of everlasting fidelity to his laws, of the consecration of your whole remaining life to your Redeemer's service ? Why, Sir, this would be most honourable to yourself ; it would be most glorious ; angels would stoop from heaven to behold it, and would shed tears of joy ; and no mortal, although less pure, less capable of heavenly sympathy, seeing such a sight and conscious of the fact, would be unmoved by it ; every eye would gaze, indeed, with a lively affectionate interest, whilst you approached the venerable pastor of Christ's flock to receive his touch ; and every heart would beat in earnest prayer, that the sacred touch might communicate to you the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost."

At this instant a visiter was announced, who followed the servant with a quick step, so that Mr. Hill, as he rose and departed, had only time to say, but he said it with an apparent feeling of the most sincere devotion, " Amen ! so be it !"

My fourth case is that of a tradesman, which differs from the foregoing ones in a peculiar manner. He was himself a churchman ; that is, when he went to any place of worship, it was to his own parish-church ; but his wife was a bigoted dissenter. So at least it should seem ; because, in spite of the numerous and total changes which took place in the chapel, in a neighbouring parish, which she frequented, she always clung to it with the same tenacity. Whether the minister were Presbyterian, Independent, or Baptist ; whether he were Arminian, or Calvinist ; a follower of Whitfield, or Wesley ; whether he prayed extemporaneously, or according to the forms of the church of England,—Mrs. Young never forsook her chapel. Whenever I heard of a schism there, I endeavoured to detach her from it, and restore her to the church ; and once there was so violent a schism, that I took some steps to induce the rector of the parish where it was, to get possession of the chapel himself ; but things came round again, my arguments were overlooked, and Mrs. Young was found in her usual place, the most distinguished member of the sect, whatever might be its principles, or its name.

Now I must do this lady the justice to say, that she never spoke ill of *me*, or undervalued my services in the parish ; and when her only son was of age for confirmation, and I had given him

a tract which I wrote upon the subject, she was well pleased with the tract itself, and also desired me to prepare him for the ceremony. It was upon this occasion, that she hinted to me her suspicion, that Mr. Young, her husband, was still unconfirmed, and that he had some extraordinary reasons of his own for continuing in that state. In short, she besought me to try to prevail upon him to accompany his son, and to be confirmed with him.

Under these circumstances, one day when I had finished my conversation with the young man at his father's house, I asked him to send his father to me in the parlour. He came immediately, and when he had sat down, I said, "Your son will do very well, Mr. Young. He knows his catechism perfectly, and, what is still better, he seems rightly disposed to profit by his confirmation." "I hope so, Sir," he answered; "he is a good youth, a very good youth; but it is a serious thing, Sir, for people to take such a quantity of duties upon themselves of their own accord, and in so solemn a manner." "Yes," I said, "it is a serious thing, undoubtedly; but the more solemn the manner of doing it the better. The impression may last, and the duties may be the more likely to be performed. As to the quantity of the duties, and their taking them upon themselves of their own accord, it makes no difference in the end, Mr. Young. Whether confirmed or unconfirmed,

you know; whether with our will, or against our will, we must needs perform every duty that God requires of us." "But are not the godfathers and godmothers answerable, Sir," he enquired, "until *we* make *ourselves* answerable by being confirmed?" "Then their case would be very deplorable," I replied; "at least the case of a great many whose godchildren are never confirmed at all. Do you really imagine, Mr. Young, that the sponsors will be punished for the sins of persons grown up to years of discretion, merely because those persons have avoided confirmation? It is true enough, indeed, that many sponsors, to their great surprise and dismay, will be called to account for the sins of those, whose religious education they ought to have watched over and promoted, but did not. It was for that purpose they became sponsors, and the duty was enjoined upon them with an awful solemnity. If they neglect it, therefore, they must abide the consequences, which will be terrible no doubt. But it will never be in the power of any person, by a wilful neglect of confirmation, to throw the guilt of his sins upon his sponsors. The soul that sinneth, it shall die for its own sins, whether the sponsors be punished or not."

Mr. Young now began to show signs of alarm, but he was not entirely convinced. So he said, "But does it make no difference, Sir, whether we come forward publicly, and bind ourselves so-

lemnly to perform certain duties, or whether we forbear and enter into no such engagement?" "It will make no difference," I said, "at the tremendous day of judgment. If we are acquainted with the laws of the gospel, or have had means and opportunities of becoming acquainted with them, we shall certainly be tried by them, whether we have entered into any personal engagement to live suitably to the Gospel, or not. They will be terribly mistaken who refrain from being confirmed, and then think that they may live as they please, without any religious belief, and without any religious practice. No, no; they will be bound precisely by the same obligations, although not contracted in the same manner, or of their own accord. What God has revealed, they must believe; what God has commanded, they must perform; what God has forbidden, they must renounce,—whether they voluntarily take it upon themselves to do so or not. Nothing is more true than this."

By this time Mr. Young's alarm had increased considerably, and he could not conceal it; so that I was now perfectly master of the circumstances of his case. It is, I believe, not an uncommon one, although very absurd and irrational. I had another of the same sort immediately after this of Mr. Young's, with one difference, indeed, that the unconfirmed person came voluntarily to *me* to talk about it, which Mr. Young appeared to have no intention of doing.

When I had made a full discovery, as I supposed, I went on in this manner — “But there is another thing to be considered, Mr. Young, very important and very awful. A man who thinks, that, by not being confirmed, he is free as yet from the conditions of the Gospel, in order to be consistent, should think also that he is not within the pale of the covenant of the Gospel. For, surely, he would reason very inconsistently, and come to a strange conclusion, if he persuaded himself that he might have the covenant without the conditions. Reflect upon the covenant itself. It is a covenant of infinite mercy, by which our sins are forgiven for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. By nature we are all born in sin, and are consequently the children of wrath. By this covenant, of which baptism is the pledge, we are made the children of divine grace and favour; the punishment due to our sins is graciously remitted; we are put into a capacity of enjoying life and bliss eternal; or, in the words of the catechism, we become members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Into this covenant we are initiated in our earliest infancy, by the instrumentality of our sponsors, long before the dawn of reason, and therefore, long before we were capable of performing or even understanding any of the duties required of Christians. It was hoped that whilst we continued in that

state God would be graciously pleased to look upon us as persons entitled to those inestimable privileges ; and in the mean time our sponsors engaged for us that we should be instructed in the Christian duties, and educated in all respects as Christians ought to be, who have such bright hopes and glorious prospects before them. This engagement is binding upon *them* (no engagement, observe, to bear our sins, but only to see that we are properly instructed in our religion) until we *are* so instructed, or until by our years we *might* have been. From that moment, whatever we ourselves may do, their engagement is at an end. They are desired, indeed, to take us to the bishop to ratify the conditions of the covenant in our own persons ; but it is plain that they have no power whatever to force us to go against our inclination. Now, then, I wish you to judge, from the whole of this account, whether our refusing to go, under the idea of not being held to the conditions, does not amount, virtually and in truth, to a renunciation of the covenant itself. In all human covenants the effect is clearly so. If we reject the part which binds ourselves, we annul the part which binds another. By not taking our own part upon ourselves, we release the other from *his* part. Our part was a burden, if you choose to call it by such a name, and we wish to be rid of it ; but then we cannot be rid of it without being rid of the advan-

tage too, which was covenanted on the other part. If you apply this to baptism, the thought is most alarming and tremendous. Would any man wilfully and willingly do anything, which might seem, even remotely, to imply that he renounces, or even lightly esteems, such mighty blessings as those to which his baptism alone entitles him?"

This interrogatory pressed hard upon Mr. Young, and he exclaimed with much agitation, "I must tell you the truth, Sir, and you will be surprised to hear it, I am sure,—I have never been confirmed myself." "I am sorry for it," I said, not affecting surprise at a thing which was no novelty to me; "but you will have an opportunity, in consequence of your long neglect, of going to the bishop with a more thorough understanding of the matter, and with all that feeling of repentance towards God, and faith towards Jesus Christ, of which very young persons are too seldom sufficiently sensible. Thus you may extract good out of evil." "But would you have me go there *now*, Sir?" he inquired, almost trembling. "By all means," I answered; "especially, as you seem to have been labouring under an error. The sooner you correct it by a substantial act the better, and the more honourable it will be for you. And perhaps, you will bind yourself by stronger and sincerer resolutions to renounce all evil, than you would otherwise have done; and being by your

age more experimentally aware of your need of spiritual assistance, you may pray more fervently for it, when the bishop lays his hands upon your head. This will be profitable to you in a high degree."

These explanations of mine were evidently far from being agreeable or satisfactory to Mr. Young. There might have been something in his life, and something in his trade; some habits contracted, both of living and conducting his business; nothing indeed so bad as the light weight, the scant measure, the deleterious mixture; but still something or other, besides the evening carousal after closing the shop, which he knew to be an abomination to the Lord, but which he could not instantly or easily relinquish. God forbid that I should even suspect him of any acknowledged dishonest practices. He had been troubled, undoubtedly, by informers; but, on those occasions, when he related the circumstances to *me*, as he always did immediately and frankly, I could not discover that there was anything morally amiss; and he had served the parish-offices, not only without any stain upon his reputation, but even with credit and honour. However, something evidently preyed upon his mind; and, after ruminating for a while, he said, humbly enough, "I never was a man, Sir, who set up any pretence to be thought better than my neighbours; and I am

unwilling now to undertake and vow in the church what I may not be able to perform." "But, I presume you will allow," I said, calmly, "that, in order to be saved, you must perform, whether you undertake and vow to do it, or not, whatever God commands." He could not deny it. "You allow also, it seems," I said, "that you are not now in the actual practice of all God's commandments." He confessed it. "Then," I said, "some change is necessary, is it not, if you would save your soul?" "I intend to repent, Sir," he answered. "Do you mean," I asked, "by repenting, to leave off everything wrong, and practise everything right?" "Why, to be sure, Sir," he replied, "*that* is the only proper repentance." "And what do you think of human life?" I inquired. "Do you think it so certain, that you may defer your repentance to a distant day with perfect safety?" "No, indeed, Sir," he answered, "I am well convinced of the contrary." "Then perhaps you acknowledge," I said, "that the sooner you repent, the better chance you will have of acceptance with God, through Jesus Christ." "It is very true," he replied. "Before a man repents," I said, "must he not make some sort of resolve that he *will* repent?" "He must, certainly," was his answer. "And," I said, "if the resolve be a weak one, will it not probably be ineffectual? but if strong, and accompanied by solemn circum-

stances, permanent, steady, and operative?" He allowed it without difficulty. "Now then tell me," I said, "whether any resolution is likely to be stronger and more solemn, and therefore more effectual, than one voluntarily made in a holy place, consecrated to the Almighty God; made aloud, too, in the hearing and the sight of multitudes of witnesses; the person who makes it, moreover, being especially marked by everybody, on account of his more advanced age?"

This came home to Mr. Young's conscience, and he answered, rather faltering, "What you say, Sir, is undeniable; I cannot contradict it; but—but—but—" Here he stopped, and began to ruminate. "Well, well," I interposed, "there are difficulties, without doubt, seeming difficulties at least. I will state my sentiments about them, not pretending to know what your real difficulties are, but only begging that you will silently apply to yourself whatever may suit your case, if anything does." He was now on tenterhooks, but I soon relieved him by keeping very much in generals. "One of the greatest obstacles to a true Christian life is an immoderate love of gain. All dishonest gain must be condemned and abandoned at once; but much gain that appears to be honest may equally lead to a man's destruction, by engrossing all his time and all his thoughts, and never permitting him to think seriously of more

important matters. Gain is the primary object, at any rate, if not the sole object; but it ought to be only secondary. The first object *must* be the kingdom of God, and every other in subserviency to *that*. So God himself tells us, and we cannot demur to it. But then we shall be poorer than we are; we shall not have so much to spend; we must be put to the mortification of living without the same show, without many things which habit has taught us to consider indispensable comforts. Now this is all very ridiculous. One grain of wisdom outweighs a hundred arguments of this sort. Take the strongest case. If a man were to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, what could be more calamitous to the man himself, although the world esteemed him the happiest of mankind? Would not this very man regret, when it was too late, that he had not been a beggar, in the most abject poverty and misery upon earth, if he might but have escaped eternal punishment? This proves to us irresistibly that all our distinctions of wealth and poverty, and all the consequences of the one and the other, are not worth a wise man's thought, when brought into competition with duty. Duty must be done, whatever may follow in this world; and therefore we ought to bind ourselves to do it in every way that we can, the most solemn and the most awful."

I paused, but Mr. Young was silent. I re-

sumed thus: “Pleasure, not real pleasure, but what men’s fancies and habits represent to them as such, is another great obstacle to a Christian life. Instead of spending their evenings, when business is over, quietly in the bosom of their families, which appears to *me*, to be the greatest and most rational and natural of all pleasures, they must resort, forsooth, to the tavern, and waste half the night there, smoking, drinking, singing, gaming, discussing the affairs of their neighbours and of the government, whilst the one only needful affair of their own salvation, goes daily more and more to ruin. Now, I ask them this question. Do they not see and understand, that to many people, these pleasures, as they are called, are utterly odious, even in idea? that the same people, so far from being happy, or fancying themselves happy, in leading such a life, would be perfectly miserable? Cannot the others then acquire this feeling? Would they not be glad at least if they could find as much happiness in home, and sobriety, and tranquillity, as in the tavern, and excess, and revelling? But it is clearly possible, because it happens to many, and they know it. Why do they not try the thing then themselves? The sting of doing wrong will one day give them insufferable anguish, however merry and jovial they may be now. Why will they not procure for themselves an approving conscience by doing right

Depend upon it, they will then be truly happy. An approving conscience is a continual feast. What advice now would you give to these men? I should think to leave their present pursuits as speedily as possible, and to oblige themselves by irrevocable vows, if they could, never to return to them again."

Mr. Young was very uneasy, but he now broke his silence, and said, mournfully, "Why, to be sure, Sir, that would be the best advice; and if you could persuade them, that they would be happier, or even as happy at home as in company, the change might not be so difficult to compass. But, I fear, Sir, they will not believe *that* upon anybody's authority. I am certain, they do not think anybody happy who lives upon such a system, but melancholy and wretched. However, when men come to a certain age, Sir, it is high time to look about them, and to consider whether they are right. You have convinced me, Sir, that I ought to do *that*; but I know I shall be laughed at by my present companions, if I desert them, and especially if I take so decisive a step as to go to the bishop to be confirmed. I must be a different man, Sir, from what I am now, if I am able to bear up against it; but, after what you have said, I will try."

I was, of course, very much delighted with this good resolution of Mr. Young's, and I said imme-

diately, “ If you try, you will scarcely fail of success. God will certainly bless, in some way or other, both the resolution and the attempt; and let me tell you, what perhaps you have not considered sufficiently, that in consequence of the ceremony, which you will celebrate with such proper feelings, you may confidently expect so much supernatural aid, that every difficulty will vanish, either gradually or all at once, and you will find it as easy to perform your duties in future, as it is now to neglect them. The imposition of the bishop’s hands will produce an effect almost as visible as in the primitive times. You will not be able, indeed, to work miracles yourself, but it will work a miracle upon *you*, of which you will be fully assured, when you perceive yourself walking in newness of life, and acknowledge the path to be pleasantness and peace. The giving of the Holy Spirit is one of the great promises of the Gospel to those who ask for it, and put themselves in the way of receiving it—you will do this Mr. Young.”

“ Aye, aye, Sir,” he replied, shaking his head doubtingly, “ I have heard a great deal about the Spirit, but I cannot comprehend it at all.” “ If you will be content with the Scripture account,” I said, “ you may comprehend it very well. If you listen to fanatics, and still retain your own sober senses, you will be puzzled, certainly. To enter into *their* views, you must have a spice of fanati-

cism yourself. *Their* things can only be discerned after *their* manner. But, I can assure you, you will discern the Spirit clearly enough, and most usefully in the Scripture manner ; that is, not sensibly but by his fruits, which are all the Christian graces and virtues, and the delightful consciousness of growing in favour with God and your Redeemer. The first improvement that you make in the conduct of your life or your business, hail *that* as the proof of the Spirit's salutary influence ; and never trouble yourself about any other sort of proof. Anything else, indeed, might easily mislead you ; this never can ; this is absolutely infallible."

He was silent ; so I went on to the only point which seemed now to remain. "But remember, my good Sir," I said, "that you will want new strength perpetually, either to carry you onward more rapidly and more vigorously, or to restore you, if alas ! you should fall ; or to overcome the occasional obstructions, which might otherwise check, and bar your progress in righteousness. Trials may come, which cannot be surmounted without greater measures of the spirit. Never omit, therefore, any opportunity of getting them ; and especially do not omit the best opportunity of all, at the holy table of your Saviour. Bring your son with you, and kneel there side by side. The natural affection that is between you will be

heightened into a nobler tie ; it will expand itself into a holy Christian love ; you will eat and drink the pledges of salvation together, and be united by a sacred indissoluble bond that shall be proof against time and against eternity itself. Beautiful spectacle ! the parent and the child saying Amen for each other, when the minister of Christ puts the awful elements into their hands, and prays that they may be the food of everlasting life !”

This overpowered him, and I saw a large tear rolling down his cheek. I too was not a little affected, and feeling myself thus suddenly checked, I got up, and hastened away. Perhaps, if I had resumed my speech, with the view of exciting a still greater emotion, I might have weakened instead of increasing the effect. So I preferred to finish here, although with a lame conclusion.

§ III.—MISCELLANEOUS.

Two sermons had now been preached both in the morning and afternoon, and the time arrived for the first public examination of the candidates. From twenty to thirty of various ages, but all young, presented themselves at once. On subsequent occasions there were many more, and I

thought it expedient to divide them between myself and my curate ; leaving *him* in the church with one party, and taking the other to my own house. In fact the only way of doing much good by these examinations would be to converse with every candidate singly, or with two or three together at the most ; but when there are several hundreds to be examined, it is absolutely impossible ; and if it were possible, it would be wearisome to the examiner in the extreme. However, I never refused to receive single persons who came to me on weekdays at the rectory ; and, perhaps, it happened to me, at some confirmations, to receive as many as fifty in this manner, during the time that intervened between the first notice and the day of the ceremony. Some of these were brought to me by their parents, who were present when I talked with their children ; others came alone. By and by I will give examples of these several kinds ; but now I am within the rails of the altar, and my catechumens are standing without, arranged so as to be all under my eye.

“ My good young people,” I generally began thus, “ be very attentive to what I am going to say to you, and look at me the whole time that I am speaking. When I turn about from side to side to ask a question of any of you, let me be sure to find all your faces fixed upon mine ; then try to understand the question, and to answer it as

well as you can." After this opening, I cast my eyes round, for a short time, to see if they complied with my request; and the inattentive, of whom there were always several, having been warned, one after the other, at length there was usually as good order as I could expect, and they were then prevented, in a very great degree, from making any observations upon their companions, by being fastened upon *me*.

This essential point being accomplished, I began again, and first put some questions to them which they were almost sure to be able to answer. "You wish all of you to be confirmed," I said, "do you not?" "Yes, Sir," they replied, immediately and unanimously. "And do you know," I inquired, "who it is that will confirm you?" "The bishop," they answered, as readily as before. "But how will he do it?" I inquired next. "He will put his hands upon our heads," some of them replied. "Yes," I said, "you are very right, and I will show you the way in which he will do so." Then I advanced towards them, and laid my hands upon the heads of a few of them in the middle of the circle, and asked them how they knew that this would be done to them, and their answer was, that their mothers told them so, or that they had read it themselves in the prayer-book. "I am very much pleased, indeed," I said, "with those who have looked into their prayer-books to

see what is written there about this ceremony of confirmation, and I advise you all to do the same before you go to the bishop; and then you will know better what you are about from the beginning to the end. It will be a good thing for you to read upon baptism too; because, unless you understand about your baptism, you will not understand so well about your confirmation. Read, therefore, about them both, my good young people." To this they generally answered that they would.

" Now then," I continued, " I am going to ask you a more difficult question. It is this:—Do you know why the bishop lays his hands upon your heads?" Here, all being silent, I separated the question into parts, and asked first, if they were aware that some great and good persons, mentioned in the New Testament, were accustomed to do it? To this one or two replied, " Yes, Sir, the Apostles did it." " It is very true," I said, " the Apostles did it certainly, and the apostles were the ministers of Christ, like the clergymen are now-a-days; but they were the chief ministers too, just as the bishops now are. One of the bishops, therefore, will lay his hands on *your* heads, after the example of the apostles, and no other minister below a bishop, like *me*, would dare to do it, except for the purpose of showing you how the bishop will do it. But now

tell me what happened to the people on whose heads the apostles laid their hands?" "They received the Holy Ghost, Sir," perhaps a single child answered. "Yes," I said; "and to receive the Holy Ghost must be some wonderfully good thing to be sure; for your Catechism calls him *God* the Holy Ghost. So that if he be God, and come to you to live with you, you can never want anything that is good for you. Has not God all power to do what he pleases?" To this the answer was unanimous, that he had. "Now," I said, "in those old times, the people who received the Holy Ghost were able to do very extraordinary things; do *you* expect the same, when the bishop puts his hands on you?" Here they were quite at a loss, and all silent again. So I enquired what their Catechism told them that the Holy Ghost would do for them? "He sanctifieth me," one of them answered. "True," I said; "and he cannot do anything better for you than *that*. Sanctifying you is making you holy as he is holy himself; and if he does this for you, you will get to heaven. But God will let nobody come there who is not holy; that is, pure and clean from all sin. They who think what is wrong, or speak what is wrong, or do what is wrong, are not holy; they are sinners, and in danger of being sent to the terrible place of punishment. But if you receive the Holy Ghost, and he dwells with you in

your hearts, and you obey him in everything, then all your thoughts, words, and actions will become holy ; you will be sanctified by him, and thus made fit for heaven. From the time that you were baptized, God was so gracious as to send the Holy Ghost to be always ready to help you ; and now, I hope, when the bishop lays his hands on you, and prays for you, the Holy Ghost will come and help you more and more, and thus that you will be able more and more to shun everything wrong, and to do everything right. Without the help of the Holy Ghost you would have no power of this sort at all. See then what an excellent thing it is for you to be confirmed, if you can but get this help."

When I had advanced thus far, I thought it expedient to read to them, out of the service itself, all that related to the Spirit, which is contained in the appointed prayers. "In the first of these prayers, it appears," I said, "as I told you before, that you had received the Holy Ghost already ; but that it is necessary for you to be strengthened by him afterwards, and to increase daily in every grace which he can bestow upon you. Perhaps you understand, yourselves, that it will be much more difficult for you always to do right hereafter, when you become men and women, than it is for you to do right now, when you are still young, and under the care of your parents, and not

tempted so much to sin as grown-up people are. But if you understand this, you will also understand that you will want more help then than you want now ; that is, more knowledge of God and his laws; more fear of his mighty power, by which he could destroy you in a moment for ever ; more wisdom to choose always what is most pleasing to *him*, and to think it best for yourselves ; more strength and fortitude to resist all temptations to evil, whether they assault you from without, or spring up in your own bosom : this is the increase then that the bishop will pray to God to grant to you all ; and if you join with him heartily, you will be sure to have it, and in the end to obtain everlasting life."

Probably, whoever reads this will think that, being so plain, it must have been well understood, even by the meanest capacity ; but, from my long experience in talking with young persons, especially in the charity-schools, I very much doubted about it. So I resorted to a discussion of particular instances. I took the cases of drunkenness and of poverty. With respect to drunkenness, I showed them that, at present, it was almost out of their power, if they wished it ever so much ; that they had scarcely any temptation to it whatever ; and that their parents would not suffer it at any rate, or would correct them most severely if they were ever guilty of it. But that when they were

their own masters, and could do as they pleased, and saw multitudes of people, like themselves, all around them, delighting to live in the alehouse, and had money besides in their pockets to spend as they would, it was a very different thing, and would require all the graces that I had explained to them to prevent them from falling into sin. With respect to poverty, which was the condition of the greater part of them, it cost them now but few cares, and but little resolution and fortitude, to bear it without murmuring against God, or injuring their fellow-creatures, in comparison with what it would cost them hereafter, when they would have to provide for themselves and families of their own. Now indeed they scarcely were sensible of it at all; the whole trouble fell upon their parents. It was true, if their parents were sick, or without employment, and no charitable persons came to their relief, then the children might feel the distress in the want of their usual food and clothes; but every calamity of this kind would be felt by them in a tenfold degree, if they themselves were husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and saw their children crying around them for bread, or languishing in disease for want of medicine. How would they then be tempted to complain of their condition, and to accuse God of injustice in making them poor instead of rich; to covet the property of their rich neighbours,

which seems too to be within their reach ; and at length to take what is not their own, and thus to be led on, step by step, to the most dreadful crimes ! “ Think,” I said, solemnly, “ how much more spiritual help you will want then, to keep you contented in the midst of extreme sufferings, without touching or desiring what belongs to another ; to convince you that, afflicting as your situation may appear to be, still it is the best for you ; to give you the firm assurance that God will never leave you nor forsake you ; and to open your eyes to see the glories of the future world, for which the evils of this shall prepare you, if you support your trials with honesty, with patience, and with trust in God ! Now then, I am sure, you understand how necessary it is for you to grow in the spirit daily more and more ; and, God be thanked ! he has promised that you shall do this, if you yourselves ask him for it. But the bishop also will ask him for you, and will lay his hands on your heads to obtain it. May God bless the prayers of the holy man with success, and so bring you all at last to heaven ! ”

My catechumens were now as serious as I could reasonably expect, some of them having been very ill brought up, and being extremely ignorant ; but, in general, young persons of low rank do not appear to be so careless of their salvation, or so much disposed to make the mention of it a matter

of levity, as ill-educated school-boys even of the highest rank. Talk to them about the destiny of their souls, and there is always a degree of awe that shows itself in their looks. So now, when they heard my good wishes for their happiness, poured forth with no little fervency, they seemed to be struck with a notion that, if *I* was concerned for them, they were still more concerned for themselves, and bound to listen to me with their whole attention.

Supposing them to be in this state then, I resumed thus: "But observe, my good young people," I said, "God does not make these great promises to everybody. No, no; he only makes them to those who are in covenant with him. Do you understand what I mean by a covenant?" At this there was a general silence, not one appearing to be able to explain the term, or to have any notion of the thing. So I continued: "God was angry with all mankind, both on account of their own sins, and because they came into the world with sinful dispositions derived from our first wicked parents, Adam and Eve. Some dreadful punishment therefore was the only thing which they had reason to expect. But God wished to be merciful, and to enable them to regain his favour. So he consulted with his only Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost, how to bring about his gracious design. And what do

you think was the wonderful plan by which they determined to do it? Jesus Christ actually undertook to suffer punishment in our stead, and the Holy Ghost offered to come down and dwell with us, to make us better people than we were before. So this was agreed upon by these three heavenly persons amongst themselves. God the Son promised to die for us, God the Holy Ghost promised to sanctify us, and God the Father promised to pardon us, and give us everlasting life. Such was the agreement—such was the covenant, as I call it, on *their* parts. Now let us see what is expected of *us*, on *our* parts; for, wherever there is a covenant or agreement, there are always two parties to it, and each party is bound to do something, the one as well as the other. But first it is necessary for us to enter into the covenant to make ourselves capable of the promises; and this we do by baptism. Being baptized, however, when we are too young to understand anything about it, it is fit that, when we *do* understand, we should declare in some public and solemn manner that we accept the covenant, and put our whole trust in it, and intend to abide by it for ever. This we do at our confirmation. Then come the actual duties of life, which make *our* part of the covenant. On account of our tender age at our baptism, we had godfathers and godmothers, who undertook for us that we should be instructed in

these duties, and that we should take the obligation of them upon ourselves when we arrived at years of discretion. The bishop therefore in the beginning of the service puts this very question to you, whether you come to him with that intention and resolution, and you will be required to answer that you do. This is a most important part of your confirmation, to which you must attend with all the care and earnestness in your power."

When I had arrived at this point, I examined them next, out of the Catechism, as to the duties themselves, and dilated upon them as much at large, and as impressively, as I could, according to the method which I have already described in other parts of this chapter. The Sacrament also having been explained to them, and the supreme necessity and advantage of receiving it immediately after their confirmation, as well as frequently during their whole subsequent lives, I dismissed them with their certificates. I pass rapidly over all this, having nothing new to say about it; but whilst I recollect, it may be worth while to mention, that I kept a list of all my catechumens, in a book provided for the purpose. The use of this is to enable the minister to remember more perfectly, or to ascertain more readily, which of his young people have been confirmed, and which have not, that he may act towards them accordingly, and as his duty might seem to require of him. This list

I delivered, as a matter of course, to the bishop's chaplain ; but when he was informed of the object of it, he always restored it to me, for my own private custody.

I turn now to a different instance. A very little boy, whom I knew to be very wicked nevertheless, stopped me one day in the street, and asked me for a ticket. " You must be examined first," I said, " that I may see whether you are fit to receive a ticket ; and I cannot examine you here in the street : but how old are you ? " " Fifteen, Sir," he answered. " Then, as far as age goes," I resumed, " it is proper enough, that you should be confirmed ; but you are very small, and look very young for *that* age." " Does *that* signify, Sir ? " he inquired rather pertly. " No," I said, " it does not *really* signify. However, besides age, many other things are required, which *you* perhaps have never thought about. Come home with me, and I will see if you are prepared ; I will not refuse you, because you are so little, and appear so young." " I can say my Catechism, Sir," he asserted proudly, as we went along. " I am glad of it," I said ; " *that* is one of the things required of you ; but the great thing is to be always ready to do what the Catechism teaches you. God does not care about your being able to *say* your Catechism, but about your *doing* it. However, you must learn it first, in order to know what you have

got to do ; and, therefore, I am much pleased with you for having learnt it. *That* is a necessary step, but the next is the greatest and the most necessary, and one which will be sure to make God your friend. It is the doing, the doing, the doing always what is right, which *he* wishes, and will reward ; but the saying and not doing, or the doing what is wrong, especially when you can say what is right, is certain of being punished by him, and most terribly too, at the last day when he will judge us all."

My little catechumen now looked very grave, and dropped behind me, and followed in silence. Not another word passed between us, till I was at home, seated in my study, and had placed him before me. His hat he laid on the floor, to be free and unincumbered ; and then he answered with the most perfect accuracy, a great many questions, out of various parts of the Catechism, which I put to try his strength. For all this I praised him highly, which appeared to be very gratifying to him ; but at length, I said, "Now my little man, it is plain that you know your duties very well ; tell me, are you thinking of doing them ?" He hesitated ; so I asked him what he thought of his performances up to the present time. "Do you think," I said, "that you have done your duty hitherto ?" "No," he answered, in a single word, sullenly, and looking down. "For instance," I

said, “you have not kept your hands from picking and stealing, have you?” His conscience smote him; he blushed, but did not confess. “You have not kept holy God’s Sabbath-day, have you?” I redoubled upon him. He looked up, as if he was not conscious of sin in that particular, or did not understand me. “Did not I once see you,” I asked, “on a Sunday, playing at pitch and toss with some of the wickedest boys in the parish, in the lane leading to Rector’s Green, and when I turned the corner and came suddenly in sight of you, you scrambled over the hedge, and hid yourself behind a tree?” “I was only playing with old buttons,” he answered, half-smiling. “Perhaps so,” I said, “but you supposed yourself to be doing something wrong, or you would not have run away, and skulked, as you did.” “I did not wish to meet with you, *just then*,” he replied; “*that is certain.*” “No,” I said, solemnly; “I was one of God’s ministers; I put you in mind of church; I had besides often warned you not to let bad companions entice you away from it; the bells were ringing at the time to give notice that the sacred service would soon begin; you were in your week-day clothes, and had clearly no intention of being there; you were breaking the Sabbath in more ways than one, and you knew it very well; my presence, therefore, was not very pleasant to you, but it was very useful, if it only convicted you

in your own mind, that you were sinning against God ; and *that* it did, I am sure."

Upon this he held down his head again, and was speechless. " Well," I said, " hitherto then, it is plain, you have not done your duty, either to God or your neighbour. Suppose you had died in that state ; where would your soul have gone, do you think ?" " Would it have gone to the devil, Sir ?" he asked, suddenly looking up, and with his face full of alarm. " What could have saved it ?" I said. " Who will be cast into hell-fire, if not thieves and Sabbath-breakers ?" He was more and more disturbed ; but after ruminating for a short time in silence, he exclaimed, with vivacity, " I can be honest, and go to church for the future, Sir." " And will *that* save you, of itself ?" I asked. " I hope so," he answered ; " for I know of nothing else that I can do to save myself, if *that* will not." " We will see about *that* presently," I said. " But it seems you think yourself quite sure of being able to be honest, and to go to church regularly for the future." " What should hinder me, Sir," he replied with quickness and decision, " if I like it ?" " Why," I said, " perhaps the devil will try to hinder you, and with so much cunning and power will he attack you, that you will not be able to keep the strongest resolutions." " The devil, Sir !" he exclaimed, staring at me with surprise, " how will he do

it? Did not I always know very well when I stayed from church, and rambled about amongst the orchards, stealing apples, and pears, and cherries, that I could have done otherwise, if I had been willing? The devil shall never make *me* do anything against my own inclination."

"Then," I said, "it was your own inclination, hitherto, it appears, which has caused you to do so many wicked things?"

This perplexed him. He was aware, no doubt, in an instant, that he had deprived himself of all excuse; and he would have now been glad, perhaps, to retract his words, and to have ascribed everything bad, of which he had been guilty, to the spiritual enemy of mankind and author of evil; as so many are disposed to do, absurdly or hypocritically. But as yet he was not initiated into this school; he followed genuine nature, without any more sophistry than corrupt nature herself is apt enough to suggest; and, as he was conscious of nothing but the impulses of his own passions and reasonings, he called in nothing else to account for, or to extenuate, his sinful actions.

After a short silence, as he was evidently not preparing to speak, I said solemnly, "My poor little man, your inclinations, without doubt, are bad enough. It is the case with every one of us. Although it does not show itself in the same way, there is abundance of bad about us all. But

besides this, our ghostly adversary, the devil, is always doing us all the mischief that he can. Of course he does not appear in his own shape; for if he did we should be so terrified as to be very cautious never to follow his advice. His subtle plan, therefore, is to work secretly upon our minds in such a manner as to prevent us from being aware that he is working there at all, and from distinguishing what *he* does from what *we* do ourselves. It is very likely, therefore, that many of our bad inclinations come from *him*, or that they are seconded and increased by him. Yet, after all, this is no excuse to us; because, as you very truly said of yourself, what is true of everybody, we may resist him successfully, if we will. You might have gone regularly to church, and have refrained from robbing orchards, if you had been determined and had taken the proper steps to do so. You felt that you had such a power, although you did not use it. But perhaps you thought that this power was entirely your own, and that you could use it at any rate whenever you would. If so, therein lay your mistake, and it was a very great one. The power belongs to the good Spirit, the Holy Ghost, and he gives it to you; and if you had prayed to God for strength of resolution to use it, you might have used it effectually. You felt that it was about you; but, nevertheless, in your then state, you could not exert it to any good

purpose ; so that you might as well have been without it, except to condemn yourself the more bitterly. For if you knew that you had no strength at all of any sort, either your own, or the gift of another, then you would have little reason to blame yourself for doing wrong ; but feeling that you had the strength, and yet that you did not use it, although you thought that you might, you would be doubly blameable in your own sight. You knew that it was wicked to stay away from church, and to go about committing depredations upon the property of others, and it seemed, to yourself at least, that you could have acted otherwise ; how must your own conscience smite you, therefore, and how angry must you suppose God to be with you ! ”

Here I paused to consider the matter a little. It was plain enough that my catechumen was more and more frightened with his own condition ; but still, I thought, he was bewildered rather than enlightened with my attempt to explain it to him. His countenance, at least, betrayed that he had received more fresh ideas than he was able to digest. I resumed in this manner.

“ Listen,” I said, “ and you will be sure to understand me at last. There is a good spirit and a bad spirit both at work about you and within you ; the good one to save your soul, the bad one to destroy it for ever. But, of the two, the good

spirit is by far the superior in power, and even almighty; so that if you will call for his aid by frequent prayer, and obey him in all things when he gives it, acting up to the best of your knowledge, and continually striving for more, you will be sure to conquer; and you will never conquer by any other means. If you trust to yourself, whatever strength you may fancy that you have, you will proceed from bad to worse. You will not be content with plundering hen-roosts and orchards; you will go on to housebreaking and murder. The evil spirit is inferior in power, but you make him far superior, by giving him many undue advantages, and by never putting yourself in the way of the good spirit. The good spirit speaks to you in the Bible; but you will not read it to learn what he speaks. He speaks to you by the ministers in the church; but you will not go there to hear them. He speaks to you in the advice of honest and pious men; but you shun such persons, and keep company with drunkards, and swearers, and vagabonds only. He speaks to you in your own conscience, which checks you every now and then, and tells you that you are in the road to ruin both of body and soul; but the habit of disobeying your conscience by degrees hardens it so much, that it ceases to check and admonish you any longer. What can God do more than this? Often he does nothing more,

but strikes the sinner dead. Often, more often, he tries another thing ; he sends some grievous calamity, which compels the sinner to stop, and think where he is. He casts him on the bed of sickness, and cuts him off from his wicked friends, and sends the minister to him, who talks of the horrors of sin and hell, of the blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, of repentance, forgiveness, and heaven. And now it is very likely that the devil will be defeated, when he was on the point of victory ; now the Holy Ghost will show his superior power. The sinner, being aroused and awakened, will put himself in the way of his help. He will attend to the minister ; he will go to church ; he will study his Bible at home ; he will kneel upon his knees, and pray for a blessing ; and the end will be, that he will get so much strength as to be able to do everything. He will not only think that he might do this, that, and the other, if he would, and always fail of doing them ; he will both feel his strength and use it. Do you understand all this ?”

“ I understand a great deal of it, Sir,” he answered ; “ and now I see what a bad plight I was in from thinking that I could break off whenever I liked. That was the very reason, Sir, why I went on ; and I am sure now that I should have gone on from bad to worse, as you have just told me. I thought I could stop at my own pleasure,

and that, whenever I stopped, there would not be much harm done ; so that I needed not to fear any great danger." "Did you fancy then," I asked, "that God would forgive all the past, as a matter of course, whenever you might choose to try to serve him more faithfully and diligently?" "Yes," he replied, "I thought so to be sure, Sir. Is not *that* repentance, and what more could I do?" "Why," I said, "it is the best part of repentance, certainly, to become good instead of bad. But would it not be reasonable to think, as God is so just a being, that he keeps an account with you, and a very exact account too, putting down all the bad on one side, and all the good on the other side, and then striking a balance between the two sides? Were you so foolish as to imagine that the moment you began to come to church, God would blot out all the bad side of the account at once?" "No," he answered, "I did not think *that* ; but I thought that he would do it, if I continued good. However, you have made it clear to me now, Sir, that I had no right to expect anything better than a balance. I understand *that* very well." "But suppose," I said, "that somebody else should have undertaken to suffer the punishment due for all your bad, and so leave you nothing but to be rewarded for all your good ; what would you think of *that*?"

Here he fell to ruminate ; so I added, "Would

you not love the person who did so, being so great and gracious a benefactor, and take the utmost care never to give him any pain by committing more sins? Especially too, if you knew, that, in order to prevail upon God to blot out the bad account which was against you, he had been absolutely forced to suffer the punishment of death for you, and that every fresh sin which you committed, was like putting him to all the agony of dying over and over again?" "Ah! Sir," he exclaimed with feeling, "now I see; you are speaking of Jesus Christ; I never understood this before. Then my repentance would not have done, Sir, would it, unless Jesus Christ had been punished for the past in my stead?" "No," I said, "the past would otherwise have always remained against you in the book of account, and would most probably have weighed down your soul to hell. But, as things now are, whenever you repent, God strikes no balances; in a moment he applies his hand to the book, and wipes out the whole of the bad score at once; he does not leave a trace of it, so kind and merciful is he; no, not even in his memory; he remembers it no more; he has no eye to see anything but what you are now at the present instant; and all this is for Christ's sake; it is the cross alone which has done it, and so we must look up to the cross, and believe and trust in *him* who died upon it."

I was affected here, and a tear started into my eyes. He saw the condition in which I was, and at length, after a little pause, he said, "This is very wonderful, Sir, and I never felt in such a way before. I hope I shall live to be a good man, Sir. It will be the worse for me, if all this is to no purpose." "It will, indeed," I replied; "but consider it in the other view, and see what an encouragement it is to you to repent. Before, you could not tell what repentance would do for you; now you see that a sincere repentance on Christ's account does away all the bad that went before. Without knowing this, who would have spirit enough to attempt to reform his ways and habits? But now tell me, my little friend, how you came to think of being confirmed? Great vows and promises of living a good life were made in your name at your baptism; in confirmation you take them upon yourself. After confirmation you are directed to receive the holy sacrament. Do you intend to pay a diligent regard to all this, or what?" "Yes, Sir," he answered, confidently; "I intend to do all that is required of me." "With God's help," I said, interposing hastily; "your Catechism instructs you very well, when it bids you answer, 'with God's help so I will.' In short, you will never be able to do anything good, till you feel how weak your own power is, and that you want a greater, and that God will give it you

by his Holy Spirit, if you constantly pray for it. You will stand in need of much help, I should think, whatever strong resolutions you may have made in your own mind. When you talk to your companions about going to church, and still more about taking the Sacrament, will they not laugh at you, and ridicule you, and deter you from it by their jibes and jokes?" "I shall have nothing more to do with them," he replied, with vivacity; "I shall give them no opportunity of leading me into further mischief. I will tell you honestly what has happened, Sir. They would have taken me with them, to put me through a window, because I am so little, and they promised me so much money that I agreed to be one in the business." He blushed here, but did not discontinue his story. "However, Sir, on the day that I was to do this, yes, in the very evening of the day, only a few hours before the time appointed, I fell from a ladder, and sprained my ankle, and was carried home in great pain and misery. Fever too came on, Sir, and I verily feared I should die; so I told my mother what a sin I had been going to commit, if I had not met with such a misfortune, and she said it was no misfortune, but a very lucky thing for me, and quite a providence. So it was, indeed, Sir; for they committed the robbery without me, and have since been all taken up, and are now lying in jail. I might have been there myself at

this moment, a grief and disgrace to my parents, and in danger of a most shameful death." "Yes," I said, "and of what after? A second death, ten millions of times worse and more horrible than the gallows. Your mother was quite right in calling your accident a providence. It was a most merciful providence; it was no accident; God's finger was plainly in it. Did this occasion your thinking of the gulf of fire which would inevitably have swallowed you up for ever?" "Yes, Sir," he replied, trembling a little; "whilst I lay sick upon my bed, I thought a great deal about it." "Very well," I said; "then God has begun a good work upon you, which I hope he will finish. He wishes to save you, *that* is clear; but he will not save you, unless it be your own wish too; and he has done much to make it your wish. First, he separates you from your wicked companions, and preserves you from the evil which has befallen *them*, in such a manner as almost to compel you to see him doing it. Next, on your sick-bed, he puts good thoughts into your heart, and gives you the desire of confessing to your mother the dangerous mode of life in which you were engaged, so that, by her warnings and counsel, you determine, now that you are recovered, to qualify yourself for confirmation. And thirdly, he sends you to me, your clergyman, for instruction and good advice, which I shall always be glad to give you.

This is all God's doing, so that you must be the more careful not to let it be in vain. The more good he is to you, the more you must fear to offend him."

Much more was said of the same kind with what I have recorded here; and the boy appearing to be deeply impressed, I then talked to him, as to others, on the particular business which brought him to me, and finally dismissed him with his certificate.

Another very wicked boy fell in my way. He had robbed his master, and being detected and overwhelmed with shame, attempted to hang himself; and his resolution to do so must have been most determined. For, the space in which he made the attempt being exceedingly small, and having nothing at hand to twist round his neck but a common towel, it required great struggling and perseverance to bring about even the chance of accomplishing his purpose. At last the noise of the struggling was heard, and some one, running to explore the cause, released him just in time to save his life, but in a state of total insensibility. Being an orphan, and without friends, he was carried to the poorhouse, and there I found him.

I knew him well, in consequence of his having once belonged for a very short time to the charity-school, and still more from attending his father

and mother on their death-beds, when I often saw him. The loss of his mother, who died first, was a great calamity to him, and probably from that time he began to go astray. When I afterwards visited his poor father, I remarked a great alteration in him for the worse ; and I was told that, at last, he even went so far as to disturb the dying man in the moment of his agony, by the bitterest reproaches, with no other reason than that long sicknesses in the family had reduced them all to poverty, and the pinching distresses consequent upon poverty. When he was brought to the poorhouse, and had quite recovered his recollection, at first he shed tears abundantly, but afterwards he threw out hints to those about him that he would take good care to execute his intentions effectually hereafter. In short, he appeared still determined not to live.

I will now relate the first conversation that passed between us under these circumstances, and then show how I led him on gradually to desire to be confirmed. The mistress of the house brought him to me in her private room. He came up to my chair with his eyes, and indeed his whole face bent on the floor, so that I could form no judgment of his feelings by the study of his countenance ; but he was evidently afraid or ashamed to look up, and meet my eye. I encouraged him therefore in this manner :—" You have no reason

to fear *me*,” I said gently, “my poor boy. I am not angry with you for what you have done; I only pity you when I think in what an unhappy condition you must have been to cause you to lay violent hands upon yourself. But if you are now sorry or ashamed on account of your rash attempt, I shall pity you the less, because it may turn to your good in the end. God loves to see people sorry and ashamed when they have done wrong, and then he is the more ready to help them to do better afterwards. However, I am come here to see you and talk with you to your profit, if you will hearken to me, and suffer me to be of use to you. I will not say one single cross word to you. So hold up your head, my poor boy; you will understand me the better if you look at me.”

He now raised his head a little, and once he ventured to lift up his eyes, but depressed them again immediately when they met mine. I then began thus:—“Did you wish to die, poor boy?” I asked, with tenderness. He made no answer, but only trembled. “I beg of you to answer me,” I said, “because otherwise, perhaps, I can do you no good. I desire also that you will speak the truth, and nothing else but the truth; for then I shall be better able to know how to do you good. And my question is a very easy one; for you cannot be ignorant whether you wished to die or not. I should suppose, indeed, that you must

have wished to die, or you would not have tried to destroy yourself." Being urged in this manner, at length he confessed that he did.

" Well," I said, " a person might wish, perhaps, to die, without committing sin by the wish; but, I am sure, the best way is to leave it to God's good pleasure to bring death, sooner or later, as he himself may see fit. ' I am very unhappy,' a man might say truly, ' but it is God's doing; and shall I fly in his face, and determine not to bear it? Would it not be much better, and very pleasing to God, if I bore it patiently, and said, Thy will, not mine, be done ? ' If you had reasoned with yourself in this manner, my poor boy, you would have reasoned wisely and piously; but, as you did not, and as you probably thought that you had a right to die if you pleased, I will ask you if you knew where you would have gone in case you had died, as you intended and wished."

Here again he made no answer, but he was much agitated, and I perceived the sweat appearing on his brow I was glad, and resumed thus. " You knew," I said, " very well where your body would have gone, at the first at least. You have seen many a funeral. It would have been laid in the ground, and there it would have rotted away, and turned all into dust. Did not you know this?" " Yes, Sir," he replied now, " I knew *that* well enough." " Yes," I said, " but

probably you did not know, or did not think, that you would not have been buried in the church-yard, where your poor father and mother lie, and the rest of your family who are dead, and that you would have had no prayers read over your corpse by one of God's ministers." Here he looked up for an instant, and with trouble marked in his countenance, seemed to ask, (for he was quite silent,) "How is this? No, indeed, I knew nothing of this, nor do I understand it now." "Why," I resumed, "your dead body would have been dragged into the highway, to some place of constant thoroughfare, and thrown into a hole, naked, without a shroud, like the body of a dog or an ass, or any other wretched beast which had died of some infectious distemper, and, what is a greater indignity than even the beast is liable to, you would have had a stake driven through your body, whilst crowds of spectators stood laughing, and jeering, and reviling, instead of the clergyman praying, and relations and friends weeping and bewailing your end. Did you think of this, or did you know nothing about it?"

To answer this question was out of his power; he was too deeply affected. The sweat, which had stood in drops before, now ran down his face in streams, and fell especially from the end of his nose, as he drooped his head towards the ground. A philosopher of this liberal age, with a mind

enlightened and enlarged by the mighty march of intellect, would pity the poor boy, no doubt, for entertaining so mean a prejudice, and caring for the carcase when life had flown from it. But to *me* the feeling of uninstructed nature is more congenial than the haughty pretence of philosophy. Let all *my* friends desire to be laid in consecrated ground, and to have the priest to pronounce over them, 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' Their relics may repose perhaps as well in an unhallowed as a hallowed bed, and may be equally ready to obey the archangel's trumpet; scattered to the four winds of heaven, the sound will still reach them, and they will stand up again upon their feet. But what is destined to undergo so glorious a change—from corruptible to incorruption, from mortal to immortality—demands honour and respect from men, even when they deposit it in the earth, and should be committed to God's safe keeping, with holy rites, and in a holy place dedicated to himself by religious ceremonies. Everything that is awful in outward form, and calculated to inspire awful reflections, should accompany to its intermediate home that which will not perish like the beast for ever, but only rest under the power of corruption for a time, and then spring up again afresh, by God's power, to nobler qualities, and with a nobler shape, purged from the evils of this transient, imperfect world. With

so sublime a destiny, would you bury it with the burial of an ass ! The feelings of this untutored boy revolted at such a thought ; he shuddered all over, and I tacitly commended him for it in my own heart.

At length I began again. “ This would have been the dreadful and the disgraceful lot of your body, my poor boy,” I said. “ But is your body the whole of you ? Have you nothing else about you much more valuable than your body ? ” He was incapable of answering, so I bid him stretch out his right arm. He did it. “ And now the left also,” I said. This he did likewise ; and then I asked him if he knew what had moved them ; but all was blank. I considered for a moment, and then it occurred to me that I had often seen children playing with a goose’s foot severed from the leg : by pulling the sinew, which was laid bare, they moved the toes of the foot, contracting and expanding them at their pleasure. This was a fortunate recollection ; for when I mentioned it to him, and applied the reasoning to his own arms, he understood perfectly that there were sinews there also, and that these sinews could not move themselves to set the arms in motion, but that they must be moved by something else which was different from his body, and no part of it whatever. To discover, however, what this prime cause of all movement, speech, and thinking might

be, surpassed his ability. As to thinking, indeed, the wonder and the difficulty were doubled ; for there not only wanted something to set him to think, as in the case of beginning motion, but to perform the very business of thinking also.

Well, after twisting and untwisting this ravelled web for some time, I asked him if he had ever heard of the soul. The moment the word was mentioned he seemed to be relieved from his troubles, and answered gladly, "Yes, Sir, to be sure ; it is the soul which does everything." "But how do you know that you have a soul ?" I asked. "Did you ever see it ?" "No," he said, "I never saw it, Sir." "Did you ever see the wind ?" I asked again. "No, never, Sir," he replied ; "it cannot be seen at all by anybody." "Then how do you know," I inquired, "that there is such a thing as the wind ?" "Because it blows in my face," he replied, "and shakes the trees." "Very well," I said ; "then you understand clearly, from this example of the wind, that there may be things, very powerful things too, which cannot however be seen by the eye. You know that there are such things only by what they do ; that is, by their effects. The soul is one of those things, and much more extraordinary than the wind. You cannot see it, but you see its works and effects. It not only moves your whole body, and every single part, the tongue amongst the rest ; but it

thinks first and teaches the tongue what to say. When I ask you a question, you consider whether you understand me ; it is the soul which considers. When you prepare to answer me, it is the soul which thinks of the answer, and then moves your tongue to speak it."

When I had advanced thus far, I said, "Now then, my poor boy, you have learnt that you are made up of two parts, a body and a soul ; and you know what becomes of the body when you die : do you know what becomes of the soul ?" He was silent ; but his tremor returned, as if he were aware that the soul might still live, and might be punished too. "Will it rot away like the body, do you think ?" I asked. "No," he replied, "I do not think *that*." "No, to be sure," I said, "how can it ? There is no earthly matter about it to rot ; it is all spirit ; nothing that you can see or touch. But where will it go ?" "To Heaven," he answered, but looking up with a countenance of doubt. "To Heaven ?" I exclaimed, "what, as a matter of course, whether it be a good soul or a bad soul ?" "No," he replied, "not if it be a bad soul." "And where then will the bad soul go ?" I asked. "To Hell," he answered. "Did you consider then beforehand," I said, "when you attempted to destroy yourself, whether your own soul would have gone to Heaven or to Hell ?" He was silent ; so I asked him

whether he had not been a bad boy. He confessed it plainly enough by his gestures, but he said nothing ; the sweat dropped again from his nose, as before. "Then your poor soul must have gone to Hell," I said ; "it was not fit for Heaven. And do you know what Hell is ?" He was speechless, and terribly agitated ; the sweat flowed in streams. So I resumed. "Hell is a place which burns for ever with fire and brimstone, and the devils stir the flames. Think what it would have been to have been cast *there*, and, after burning for millions of years, to burn as many more, and never to be nearer to an end of it. The Prince of the Devils made sure of getting you into this horrible kingdom of his ; and therefore, whilst your soul was a wicked soul, and to give you no chance of repentance, he put it into your head to hang yourself. But you had a good, a gracious, and a powerful friend, close at hand, whom you never thought of ; one who would not suffer the devil to have his own way ; one who was determined to save your soul from Hell, if possible. So he sent the people to loose you down before you were quite dead ; and thus he disappointed the devil, I hope, for ever ; for now you may get to Heaven if you will, by his further blessing. Tell me then what you think of the wonderful mercy of this Almighty and most merciful God ; tell me whether you think that he loved you ; tell me whether

you think that you ought to love *him* in return. O love him, and obey him, and thank him, whilst you live. Your soul still lives only to show its gratitude. It might have been tossing about at this instant in a lake of raging fire, in the midst of devils and wicked men; now it may mount to Heaven, and be in joy with saints, and angels, and God himself."

Here I stopped; and a short time before his tears had begun to flow. They now mingled with his sweat, and coursed down his cheeks in torrents. I left him to himself, and began talking to the mistress of the house in this manner, with the view of being useful to him without appearing to intend it, or troubling him to think how to answer me. "The saving of this boy's life is a most merciful providence, Mrs. Bates. He has been a very wicked boy, far beyond what *you* know of him. The stealing of his master's property is nothing in comparison of his behaviour to his poor dying father. God says, 'thou shalt not steal;' *that* commandment, indeed, he broke, which was bad enough. God says, 'honour thy father;' that commandment he broke also, and to make it the more sinful, it was at a time when his father stood most in need of acts of kindness and duty; when he was lying upon his death-bed, and even breathing his last sigh. In short, his poor father left this world with the terrible anguish of think-

ing that God's vengeance would needs pursue this son, thankless and depraved as he was. And so it seemed likely to be. God gave him up to the devil for a season, and the devil pushed him on to die by his own hand. If that had been done, I shudder to think of the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which would have been his portion now and for ever. By the goodness of God he has been spared. But what will be the consequence? Will it be such as God mercifully wishes, or will this boy suffer the devil to obtain the mastery of him again?" "I hope not, Sir," said Mrs. Bates. "After such a narrow escape, it would be the same as throwing his soul away, and defying God himself." "Yes, indeed," I resumed, "and woe betide *him* who defies God! It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the ever-living God! And the more good and merciful he has been to anybody, the more should that person fear him; for divine goodness and mercy, when they are slighted, and abused, and provoked, are the most terrible things in the world to have for our enemies. If a man of great power who had shown us no former kindness, and to whom, therefore, we were not guilty of ingratitude, should chance to be angry with us, we might find some way to pacify him, by appealing to his mercy, and by stirring up his pity and compassion, and thus prevail upon him to forbear to exercise his power in

our destruction. But if we offend goodness and mercy, often tried and experienced, there is no help for us ; pity and compassion have already done their work in vain ; we cannot fly to them again ; they are worn out, and if God be the offended being, nothing remains but wrath, infinite wrath, and punishment in hell-fire for ever. But I hope, as you do, Mrs. Bates, that this poor boy will be able, by God's help, to resist the devil in future, and to repent seriously of all his sins, and to become quite a new person. He may, if he will, and if God should not be so offended again as to forsake him."

After this, turning to the boy himself, I asked him, now that he understood more of the matter, whether he was sorry for what he had done, and that he had been a bad boy ; and whether he now resolved to love God in future, in return for God's great love towards *him*, and for sparing him to give him the opportunity of repentance. When he had assented partly by words and partly by gestures, I asked him again, if he thought that God *could* forgive him entirely on the supposition of his repentance. Here he looked up, and said, " To be sure, Sir, he can forgive me, if he will." " How ?" I inquired, and he was silent. " Certainly, indeed, he can," I said ; " but can you tell me, what it is, which has made it possible for God to forgive the wicked, in case of their repentance ?"

A thick darkness overspread him now, and he was quite benighted and bewildered. His countenance was that of one who saw before no difficulty in the thing, and now suddenly began to doubt, because a question was raised by *me*. "Suppose a man," I said, "were to commit a murder; might not the king pardon him if he pleased to do so?" "Yes, Sir," he answered. "And would not the king," I said, "be called merciful for doing so?" "Yes," he answered again. "But would he be just?" I asked. Here he hesitated. "Would it be just towards the friends of the murdered person," I said, "to pardon the murderer? Would it be just towards the whole country to let a murderer go free? Would not others be encouraged by the merciful disposition of the king to commit the same enormous crime, and so *our* security of life and limb would be greatly lessened?" He shook his head at this, and seemed to allow that it would not be just in the king to pardon a murderer. "But the king can pardon a murderer, if he pleases; cannot he?" I asked, as before. "Yes, Sir," he replied. "Then," I said, "it is possible for the king to be merciful without being just; but can God be so?" He hesitated again; so I said, "No, indeed, he can no more cease to be just than he can cease to be God. Even whilst he is merciful he must be just too. If God, therefore, be always just, must he not punish sin? How then can he forgive it,

even although the sinner be sorry for having broken his laws, and be a sincere penitent?"

My poor boy could not extricate himself from this difficulty. It occurred to me, suddenly to try to open his mind in the following manner: "Suppose," I said, "that you were servant to a master who had a great many valuable things in his house, and that one morning, being very mischievous, you broke them all to pieces; but that in the evening you repented of what you had done, and wished it undone; could it be undone by your sorrow, and your wishes?" "No, Sir," he replied, "it could never be undone at all." "Well then," I said, "how will your master act? Suppose him inclined to be merciful, and to forgive you; would it not be contrary to wisdom and justice to let you off without punishment?" "I ought to be punished," he answered, "certainly." "Yes," I said, "both for your own sake, and for your master's sake, and for the sake of all other servants. Suppose, then, this good master of yours, willing to accommodate matters without entirely ruining you, and at the same time not to be foolishly merciful without some regard to justice, should offer to accept your sorrow and penitence, in case of your replacing the things which you had broken; this would be very merciful in *him*, and the very least that he would have a right in justice to demand of *you*; yet it might cause you to be shut up in a jail for

the rest of your life. For you could not pay the cost, could you?" "No, indeed, Sir," he replied, "I have not a farthing in the world. This would be utter ruin to me." "Suppose then," I said, "he should declare that he would be content if another person paid down the price in your stead." "That would be very kind of him," answered the boy; "but it would do *me* no good; for I could never find anybody to pay for me. How should I be able to pay again?"

We were now upon the verge of the Christian scheme of atonement; but it will not be necessary for me to pursue the train of my reasoning any further. It required, however, two or three conversations to give him an adequate idea of this great mystery of godliness; that all mankind were in a similar condition to that which is described above; all sinners in the sight of God, without anything to pay which might satisfy God's justice, and thus enable him to exercise his mercy; that in this situation Jesus Christ, the Son of God, a person therefore of incomparable worth and dignity, stepped in between his Father's wrath and *us* miserable sinners; took voluntarily upon himself the punishment due to sinful men; paid the whole debt which was against us; and placed every humble contrite sinner, in a covenant of grace and mercy with God for the forgiveness of his sins, and the gift of eternal life. When I had led him, step

after step, to this point, the rest was easy. A flood of light had now broken in upon him ; he seemed, not only to understand, but to value this covenant, and to be sincerely desirous of testifying his acceptance of it by a public act in the holy house of God himself. And so he did.

§ IV. MR., MRS. AND MISS WYNNE.

THE last case which I shall mention is that of a young lady, who was accompanied by both her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wynne, whom I had known a long time before they came to reside in my parish. "My daughter is a poor timid little thing," said Mrs. Wynne, as she entered, leading her by the hand, "and I have brought her myself to keep up her spirits." "Oh!" I replied, "I am always glad to see a mother upon such an occasion as this. It shows the interest which you take in the ceremony, and that you wish your daughter to understand how important you think it." Thus I gave her obliquely some instruction which I suspected might be useful to her. She had no time to reply ; for Mr. Wynne, who was gouty, had now entered, and said immediately, "I hope, Dr. Warton, you will be gentle with poor Emily, for she has put herself into a great trepida-

tion about coming to you." "I am much pleased with hearing it," I answered; "it is very amiable; some young persons come to me with a careless, or even a confident air; and I conclude that they are not impressed with a proper idea of what they are about to undertake. But Miss Wynne has been more thoroughly instructed, and feels her situation as she ought."

I then advanced to Miss Wynne herself, who was a delicate, but tall and beautiful young woman, and evidently the darling of her father and mother; one whom probably they could not trust out of their own sight. To reassure her, I took her by the hand, and said, with the utmost mildness, smiling at the same time, "*You* shall examine *me*, Miss Wynne, if you please; *that* will be just as well, or even better than the usual way." "Oh! Sir," she replied in a tremor, "I could not ask you a single question, I am sure." "No," said Mrs. Wynne, "she has got into such a flutter, that it is a chance whether she will be able to answer any of yours, Dr. Warton." "Perhaps I shall not ask any," I said. "Oh!" she replied, "*that* will be charming; that will be very kind of you indeed; she will like *that* exceedingly; you will quite win her heart." "I shall be very proud of such a conquest," I said; "but where shall we have our conversation, Miss Wynne? Shall we walk out into the garden,

and discuss the great points of theology, as we pace along in some sheltered alley, or sitting under a wide-spreading umbrageous tree ; or shall we remain here, and beg of your papa and mamma to help us ? ” The thought of going out with me alone, and the dreadful sound of the difficult word, theology, I believe, threw her into a fever of alarm, and she caught hold of her mother’s arm, and looked up to her with a supplicating countenance, manifestly wishing that we might all stay where we were. So Mrs. Wynne said, “ We will all remain here, Dr. Warton, if you please ; but I and Mr. Wynne cannot pretend to help you. It will be very short, I presume.” “ Let us all sit down,” I said.

This being done, after a little pause I began thus. “ It is certainly a matter of great moment ; I mean the going to be confirmed. The examination is little in comparison ; the thing itself, the undertaking to perform the vows that were made for us by others, *that* might well alarm anybody who thought seriously about it. If, indeed, a person were firmly resolved with respect to the vows, and considered the performance of them a real pleasure, and not a heavy yoke ; then such a person might be alarmed about the examination, lest, being found unfit for the ceremony, the privileges of confirmation might for the present be lost. These are the true fears, and they are very

reasonable ; and the better Miss Wynne has been taught, the more she will feel them. But they may be carried too far. The fear of the examination might disqualify one for being examined altogether ; and the fear of the undertaking might make us dilatory in coming forward, as we ought to do, to ratify in our own persons, with all due solemnity, our acceptance of the Christian covenant which is so infinitely important to us."

Thus I thought proper to speak, having no suspicion then that these considerations were the causes of the young lady's fears, and being fully assured that they had never entered into the view of her parents, who had no other maxims than those of the great world in which they lived ; yet with the hope of communicating right principles, if I could. The task, however, seemed likely to be too difficult for me. When I stopped, Mr. Wynne immediately exclaimed, having hardly borne with me so long, " Oh ! Dr. Warton, you make it too serious an affair. We all know it to be a form which custom has established, and with which, therefore, we must all comply. Nobody's daughters come fully out into the world until they have been confirmed. It is very well and very proper, to be sure ; I say nothing against *that* ; but it need not be magnified so much. You are no Methodist, Dr. Warton. Besides, it frightens poor Emily the more to hear it talked of in that

manner." "Yes," said Mrs. Wynne, catching up her husband's tone; "and I have no wish that Emily should be too serious. She will be unfit for the society in which she ought to live; and, instead of enjoying cheerfulness and harmless gaiety, will mope away her time in the company of a few devotees, who will in the end make her as gloomy as the best of them. I do not admire such characters, Dr. Warton, I assure you. I have kept Emily out of the way of them with the greatest care, for the benefit of her health and spirits. I should not like to see her pale and fanatical."

Here Mrs. Wynne recollected, I suppose, some lady of her acquaintance, whom she was accustomed to deride as over religious, and whose complexion had taken a sallow tinge, as she might have thought, from the internal working of her principles. However, she laughed excessively at her own combination of pale and fanatical, and repeated the words, lest this effusion of her wit should be lost upon me. I watched the young lady attentively during these speeches, and perceived very clearly that she was not pleased with them, for she blushed deeply. It will be well for her, I thought with myself, if she goes out into the world with one single correct notion of her main object in life, under the guidance of such parents. She is going solemnly to renounce

pomp and vanity, and yet her first step after the renunciation will be to plunge into it, by their own scheme for her happiness. Was ever anything so preposterous as this practice? Providence places her in my way, surely, that I may endeavour to preoccupy her mind with something good. But how to accomplish it, *that* is the great question.

These reflections passed in my mind, whilst Mrs. Wynne was laughing. When she ceased, I said immediately, holding up my fore-finger, and nodding my head significantly, and speaking with a mixture of seriousness and badinage—that is, with a tone of badinage, which did not prevent them from seeing that I was serious—“ *I* shall make the best tutor for Miss Wynne, I perceive; only I am afraid that she will soon leave off fearing me, as she does a little now perhaps. But I shall be content, if she feels that degree of respect for my authority which a pupil should feel towards a tutor. Will you accept me for a tutor on this condition, Miss Wynne?” I said, turning to the young lady herself, and she replied with the greatest propriety, “ *I* shall be obliged to you, Sir, if you will instruct me on any terms.” “ Well then,” I resumed, “ *I* must magnify my office, and even for my own sake not allow it to be thought that I sit here merely in form to sign certificates. I cannot agree with your good papa in his doc-

trine of confirmation, that it is custom chiefly which makes it of any obligation, and that it is a fit prelude to the bringing out young ladies into the world. Besides, I wish you to profit by the ceremony, and I trust that you will. But this is very unlikely, if you go to it with the idea that it is a mere ceremony, and nothing more. Even with the risk of alarming you, therefore, I ought to magnify the ceremony as well as my own office. But in fact it needs not to be magnified, except in sober truth. When we recollect, that it was instituted by the great and holy Apostles themselves; that they visited the Christian assemblies to lay their hands upon the heads of the new Christians, to confirm them in their faith and practice, and to procure the Holy Spirit for their guidance and help; without further consideration it acquires in our eye a sanctity and an awe, which place it in a high rank amongst the ordinances of the Gospel. St. Paul speaks of the laying on of hands as a first principle, from which we must set out towards perfection; and, therefore, the true wisdom in *us* is not to think lightly of it, as an idle practice, sanctioned only by custom, but to regard it as of apostolical origin, and abounding in uses, which it behoves us to discover and realize. It may be true that the world, I mean the great world in which Providence appoints you to live, does not view it in this serious light. But I fear

the world is in the wrong in this, as it is in too many other important things ; and I hope you will be well fortified with sound opinions and firm resolutions, before you go into it. The going into it is a tremendous experiment for the young. Cheerfulness and gaiety are natural to them, and they are delightful to us all to see. But they are not the ends of our being. We are much too valuable to put ourselves on so low an estimate, as to imagine that we are happy and have attained our main object, if we are cheerful and gay. With innocence, indeed, my dear Miss Wynne, you may be always safely cheerful and gay ; but alas for those who are cheerful and gay without it ! The innocence, however, of which I speak, is not what the world, indulgent to faults, would call so ; namely, a freedom from gross crimes ; but a real abstinence from everything, gross or minute, which is at variance with the Gospel. We shall be tried, not by the maxims of the world, but by the Gospel ; so by the Gospel we should live, and cultivate the Gospel-character. Indeed this is the character at which we profess to aim, when we are questioned by the bishop in our confirmation, and the consciousness of falling short of it, in after-life, in whatever degree, if such be the case, ought to inspire us with a proportionate feeling of pain and sorrow. If the countenance of the negligent Christian be still merry, yet the heart, I am sure,

should be sad ; for there will be reason enough to make it so.

“ Now, Mr. Wynne,” I said, without pausing, whilst I turned my face towards him, “ if you considered me no Methodist before, you will certainly consider me one, I fear, after this. But we must not deceive ourselves by names. If I were the greatest fanatic in the world, the doctrine which I have laid down would be true nevertheless, and must not be rejected under the pretence of its coming from a suspicious quarter ; for most assuredly it is the doctrine of Scripture. I speak to *you* too, my good Madam,” I said, looking at Mrs. Wynne ; “ I suspect that you have both of you represented the matter in a lower view than it ought to be, for the sake of upholding Miss Wynne’s spirits and firmness to bear this formidable examination. But, if I am not very much mistaken, she will like my frankness best. I am persuaded, she would not like to be deceived in a thing which is really of great consequence, by having it insinuated to her that it is of little or none. The intercourse of life, and the kind offices flowing from it, are very agreeable and very necessary too ; nor do I blame the accomplishments which seem expedient to qualify young persons to move in the society of their equals with a graceful ease and propriety. But it should never be forgotten, that there are more important things than these, and that the

main point may be secured without them. They certainly contribute nothing towards it. If they did, what would become of all the lower ranks of human beings, whose souls are not less dear to God than ours? The study of those accomplishments first, and afterwards the display of them, may impede, but can by no possibility promote the attainment of that main point. Let Miss Wynne bear this in mind, and she will not value them, or any of the pleasures which they purchase, beyond their true worth. They will all sink to their proper level, that of being blanks in our existence. They will still, indeed, be proper for many, and give the same charm to society; but to those who are duly serious, because they know their great destinies, it will be nothing to rest upon as an end; it will be only a passing charm, whilst they are advancing steadily in the right road of life, and never lose sight of the real end of their being."

Mr. and Mrs. Wynne were both of them very uneasy during this long speech of mine, and would have interrupted me again and again; but I was determined to preserve the authority of my station, and I therefore repressed all their attempts by raising my tone at the instant, and assuming more solemnity. When they were patient, I relaxed from my higher flight, and came down to the moderate tenor of conversation. Now they were

at full liberty to speak their own sentiments, and to controvert mine. I waited for them in silence, and was gratified with observing that my catechumen was not at all disturbed, as if she was now for the first time informed of something which was disagreeable to her, but more and more composed and tranquil. In fact, as I learnt afterwards, she had been brought up by a governess who was a most excellent woman, and whose language on every main point had accorded with my own ; and, although Miss Wynne was not regularly initiated in the whole routine of time-wasting company, she had been taken lately to two or three assemblies, which she did not scruple to call very dull and monotonous. How long this feeling would last was another question. She was too young to have attracted much attention, and therefore found herself almost solitary in the midst of a multitude. She heard nothing better, as she leant upon her mother's arm, and was paraded about, than, now and then, “ Is *that* your daughter, Mrs. Wynne ? is *that* your daughter ? I hope you will bring her to *my* house. Has she been to the Opera yet ? Has she danced at Almack's ? ” One wave brought one inquirer of this description, and another wave another ; and so the evenings passed without anything more rational, or at least without offering any opportunity to herself, either of improving or exercising her own understanding.

When any person condescended to speak to her personally, it was merely to ask her whether she was not delighted with the throng, the hum, and the splendour of the scene; but no answer was expected, because none was anticipated that was not in unison with the raptures of the inquirers. Miss Wynne, however, as it seems, was original enough to think for herself, and to think differently. She neither liked the scene itself, nor the part which she played in it, nor her own finery. In short, she dreaded such things as yet even more than an examination.

When I had finished, after a short pause, Mrs. Wynne exclaimed sarcastically, “What good people we should all be if we followed your maxims, Dr. Warton!” “Well, my dear Madam,” I replied, in the same tone, “and is it any harm that we should all be good people? Will the world be the worse for it, or shall we ourselves be the worse for being good?” “Poh! poh! Dr. Warton,” she cried, rather angrily, “you know what I mean by being good. There is an excess which is odious to all but those who fall into it; and we have good authority, Dr. Warton, I presume *you* will allow, not to be righteous over-much.” “I fear, my dear Madam,” I said calmly, “you mistake that text of Scripture. We are told immediately afterwards, on the same authority, not to be over-wicked. Would you then argue that God

is not offended except with enormous crimes, or that he will tolerate any wickedness at all?" She hesitated; so I proceeded. "We are told also not to be over-wise; but do you imagine that we can be too wise, in heavenly wisdom at least? No, no; it is worldly wisdom, it is worldly-mindedness, it is all cunning and subtlety for worldly ends, against which we are guarded and admonished; yes, and against all knowledge too, which merely puffs up the mind, without making us better men. Everything of this sort we must despise and abandon, if we would be truly wise; that is, wise unto salvation. And with respect to righteousness, which the whole Gospel inculcates, which we are commanded to cultivate to the very utmost, as we value our future condition in the next world, do you think it possible for us to have too much of it?" "Then what does the expression mean, Dr. Warton?" she asked, evidently with a tone of irritation, but controlling herself as well as she could. "Why, my dear Madam," I said mildly, "the Gospel-righteousness embraces all virtue, and all piety, and every Christian grace; and for what purpose we came into the world, except it were to acquire daily more and more of these excellent things, I cannot imagine. But righteousness is sometimes used in a lower sense, and for the single virtue of justice. If, therefore, it had been said in your famous text, 'be not over-

just,' I think you would have understood it at once to mean that justice must not be pushed beyond equity. Of true justice, indeed, there cannot be an excess; but what men loosely call justice may be exercised with an undue severity. All rigour and unmercifulness, therefore, in the exaction of common justice is here forbidden; no virtue, my dear Madam, no goodness, no piety; we can never have enough of these."

Here Mr. Wynne exclaimed, rather pettishly, "But the world could never go on at that rate, Dr. Warton! It is in vain to talk of it; you *must* know yourself, that it is idle even to think of it, Dr. Warton. You would be as bad as Don Quixote, if you supposed it possible to reform the world in the manner and degree which you seem to insinuate." "Pardon me, my good Sir," I said, calmly, "if I do not quite understand what you mean, when you tell me that the world could never go on at that rate. You do not mean, surely, that the world would absolutely stand still, or come to an end?" "Poh! poh! Dr. Warton," he cried, irritated a little as Mrs. Wynne had been, and using the same expression, "my meaning is evident enough; it could not go on as it is; everything must be changed." "Well, my dear Sir," I said calmly as before, "and what necessity is there that it should go on as it is, and that there should not be an entire change? On the contrary, I am quite

sure that if it *does* go on as it is without some *great* change, the persons who constitute what is called the world, will come to a terrible end. I am sure of it, because the unerring truth of Scripture affirms it. You see, therefore, Mr. Wynne, that my view of the subject is the right one, and that there is a most pressing necessity for the change. Nor do I perceive that it is of any advantage, in any view, that the world should go on as it is. Do you think, for instance, that *it* is of any use to the state, or to particular families, that private individuals should shoot one another through the head, to vindicate their own peculiar sense of honour? Scripture commands us to forbear from offering affronts, and from avenging them, except by the noble mode of returning good for evil. Is it difficult to see, which will naturally produce happiness, and which misery to mankind? The sooner, therefore, we change in this respect, the better will it be for us. And what will you say of gaming?"

"Abuse gaming and duelling, Dr. Warton," he exclaimed, "as much as you will; I will not speak a word in their defence; I abominate them." "Very well," I resumed; "but the world by no means abominates them. The duellist and the gamester are not only tolerated, but honoured there; yes, and I am ashamed and even horror-struck when I think of it, much worse men,

the most depraved of our species, are received there, with open arms too, although they have plunged whole families into the deepest distress." I pronounced this with correspondent vehemence, and he replied with warmth himself, "I agree with you, Dr. Warton; they ought to be hunted out of society; they deserve to be treated as mad dogs."

"Then, my dear Sir," I said, "the world ought not to go on as it does. Here are things which require not merely to be changed, but absolutely abolished." "But such things were not in my head, Dr. Warton," he answered, with the suppressed tone of one who is aware that he has advanced a proposition which he is afterwards obliged to qualify; "I was thinking only of the common business and amusements of good society. They can neither be altered, nor do they require to be altered. There is nothing wrong about them."

"Things not wrong in themselves," I said, "often become extremely so, when they are pursued to an excess, or as if they were the only ends of our existence. But let us analyse the common business of good society, and see if everything in common practice there is so very right as to require no alteration. Do not gentlemen often sell their own horses?" He granted it. "Have you not known," I asked, "many gentlemen of your own rank, who have puffed off their own horses, and concealed their faults or blemishes, and thereby

sold them for more than their real value?" He could not deny it. " Well then," I said, " is this consistent with the high feeling of a gentleman, to whom nothing should be familiar but the most scrupulous honour, and the most perfect candour, frankness, and generosity; whatever, in short, is great and noble, and nothing else? Shall a gentleman belie himself, and be applauded too, for the sake of a few paltry pence?" " Custom allows ti Dr. Warton," he replied, rather crest-fallen; but soon he added, recovering himself, " what would you do? would you go and say, Here is a horse, blind, and lame, and broken-winded; who will buy him? This would be too ridiculous." " Take the contrary then," I said; " would you go and say, Here is a horse which I recommend to anybody who wants a good one; he has no blemishes, or faults; would you say this, when you know that he has both?" " I would not say it," he answered; " I would hold my tongue." " Well," I said; " and what price would you ask for the horse?" Here he hesitated; but at length he replied, shifting the question from himself upon others, " Why, I believe, Dr. Warton, the practice of the generality is to get as much as they can." " Then their practice," I said with warmth, " is absolutely dishonest. It is not only beneath the character of a gentleman, to be guilty of such petty tricks for a little wretched gain; it is a sort of robbery. The

knowing plunder the ignorant. They ask a price which betokens soundness and perfection ; they do not say, perhaps, in so many words, that the horse is sound and perfect ; but the price implies it, as well as if they said it. No custom, my dear Sir, can ever justify such a practice. If it be really a custom to do so, I am the more shocked at it. It shows how depraved we are, almost without seeing it ourselves. The sooner men come to correct feelings in such matters, the better will it be for them."

Here there was silence for a moment or two. My antagonist seemed unable to contest the point, but unwilling to yield it. So I resumed the discussion thus. "I will tell you a little history," I said, "which I heard many years ago, and which, however unlikely, I believe to have some truth about it." "Pray do, Dr. Warton," replied Mr. Wynne, bowing, and smiling. "A person of high rank then," I said, "once agreed with a great horse-dealer, that he would give him eighty guineas for a particular horse, if he liked him upon trial. The proposition was accepted, and my lord mounted on the instant, and rode into the Park. He was soon joined there by one of his friends, who admired the horse exceedingly, and offered him one hundred guineas for him. What should he do?" "Why tell the truth certainly, in that case," Mr. Wynne answered decisively. "I knew

you would say so," I replied; " but his lordship was not of the same opinion with you, Mr. Wynne. He had more knowledge of the world," I said, bantering a little; " indeed, I believe he prided himself upon outwitting his friend, and expected to gain glory by doing so. But, probably, even the horse-dealers themselves despised him in their hearts, although they grudged him his gain. Well, but what is this *nobleman* reported to have done? He went back to the horse-dealer, and paid him the eighty guineas; then he sent the horse to his friend on the same day, and received the hundred guineas."

" If *that* be true," cried Mrs. Wynne, " it is monstrous." " It could not be defended for a moment on any ground," Mr. Wynne added without hesitation. " No," I said, " nor anything approaching to it. There is a total departure from all honourable feeling in every transaction of this kind. Think how astonishingly that man's mind must have been perverted by his intercourse with the world, who could do such a thing, and appear afterwards in public, and even *hug* himself with the twenty guineas in his pocket! I am indignant, and use this vulgar expression on purpose to mark more forcibly my sense of the shabby meanness of such a man, so destitute of all true nobleness of heart which should be inseparable from nobleness of rank. But, to return to the

point, Mr. Wynne. Do you imagine that the business of the world could not go on, or that good society would be the worse for it, if the strictest uprightness and integrity pervaded all ranks of life, and all transactions? On the contrary, with this lax state of morals, from the hawker and pedlar up to the person of rank, who is sometimes unhappily no better, do not doubt and distrust reign amongst us all? And what so likely to impede human business, and even to make the world stand still, if *that* were possible, as trade stands still, when there is some great accidental stagnation in it?"

"We have nothing to do with this, Dr. Warton," said Mrs. Wynne hastily. "You have caught up an expression about the world standing still, which, I am persuaded, Mr. Wynne must have used in a different sense, if he really used it at all. As for myself, I speak only of our own mode of life, and of the way in which people of our fortune usually spend their time. It is perfectly innocent, and I do not comprehend how it can be changed for the better. I do not say, if the gentlemen flattered less, drank less, gamed less, fought less, left their horses to their grooms, and their coaches to their coachmen, that the world could not go on; but I say that, setting aside all profligacy and low pursuits, of which the examples are few when compared with the immense numbers which

make the mass of good society, things proceed very well in practice; very harmlessly and very pleasantly. People must meet together; they come here for that purpose; and therefore they must have their dinners, their assemblies, their balls, their music, their plays, their operas, and every other amusement to put them in good humour with one another, and to make things go off lightly, without gloom or melancholy, without feeling that time hangs heavily upon our hands, which it would certainly do, Dr. Warton, if we did not provide so well against all *ennui*. No, no; Emily here must live as the world now does, and therefore it would be a pity to prejudice her against it."

"Now, Miss Wynne," I said, turning to the young lady herself, and smiling, "if I had any chance of making a conquest of your heart before, I shall demolish it altogether, I fear." "Not by telling me," she replied modestly, "the true worth of such pleasures as I have yet seen. If they are all like those, there is no danger of my thinking too well of them, Dr. Warton; and I hope my dear mamma," she added, smiling, "will let me try to find something more amusing and better to do." "But," exclaimed Mrs. Wynne, "would you give up all your acquaintance, my dear silly child, and go out of the world?" "There is no necessity for that," I interposed, "even upon *my* principles,

unless she feels herself in any way deteriorated by mingling with the world. Whoever or whatever it may be which produces such an effect upon her, she will be in the right to abandon it. The very thing which she is going now to take upon herself is the renunciation of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world." "Yes, Dr. Warton," she cried, interrupting me with quickness, "it is the wicked world which she is to renounce. The Catechism itself calls it the wicked world; so, pray do not proscribe the innocent pleasures of common life." "I fear, my dear Madam," I said gently, "that what you call common life and the wicked world are one and the same thing." "How is *that*, Dr. Warton?" she inquired, with a countenance of surprise. "Allow me then to ask you," I said, "do not Mr. Wynne and yourself mix in the very highest society to be met with in this kingdom?" She was flattered with this question, and answered the more readily, "Undoubtedly we do, Dr. Warton; but what of *that*?" "Are pomps and vanities," I asked again, "to be found only in some lower rank, or chiefly in the highest rank of all?" She hesitated, but at length said that she did not know what pomps and vanities meant. "Why," I replied, "they mean, unquestionably, the very things that were mentioned a little while ago, or, in one single word, luxury. If you should assert, therefore, that luxury, being

relative, is to be found in every rank, yet you could not deny, I think, that the greatest luxury, beyond all comparison, is to be found in the greatest rank. Besides, in every other rank, there are other objects; luxury is not the sole object; but in the greatest rank the display and enjoyment of luxury seem to be the only end of existence: from which I infer that it is in the highest rank we must look for the most striking exemplification of what Scripture calls the wicked world. There is wickedness in every rank, because there are vain pomps and pleasures either pursued or courted in every rank; but the highest rank is entitled to the appellation by a superior claim, because pomp, and vanity, and pleasure, every feature of luxury, constitute its common every-day life."

Now Mr. Wynne interfered, and said drily, "Then *we* are to be reckoned, Dr. Warton, I suppose, by one sweeping calculation of this sort, as wicked persons ourselves; for we certainly live in this wicked world." "It is a grave and awful matter for consideration," I answered solemnly; "and any mistake or self-deceit about it would be terrible. But there are few subjects so liable to self-deceit as this. When we see a great class of mankind, all engaged in the same career, embracing amongst them the rank, the power, the wealth, the talent of a whole kingdom; and our

eye is so familiarised to all their actions, as to look upon them with complacency, and nothing perhaps occurs so flagrant or glaring as to shock our minds, now impaired by long habit, and incapable of judging accurately,—we cannot bring ourselves to believe that so vast a number of persons in such circumstances are under a sentence of condemnation. Yet, on the other hand, it would be very foolish to imagine that all of them can possibly be saved, when we know positively from Scripture that the number of the saved, compared with the number of the condemned, will be lamentably few. Besides, it appears by our former reasoning, and by the frequent admonitions addressed to the rich in the Gospel, that the number of the condemned will abound more especially in that class. Now then, how is any particular man to apply this to his own profit? Why, he must say to himself, ‘I belong to an order of men, all of whom are in great danger, and a vast majority of whom will most certainly fall; how do I differ from the majority, so as to be justified in thinking that, if I go on with them, I shall not perish with them? My fancying that I am not a wicked person is nothing to the purpose. What do I see in the others that is wicked, any more than in myself? Yet it is certain that only a few of them, or perhaps none, will be saved; for out of one generation only a few altogether will be saved,

and the few may not be in the order to which I myself belong. If I find then that there is no difference between myself and the others in all the great features of the order, I must destine myself to the same end with them, or make a strong effort to escape for my life.' "

Mr. and Mrs. Wynne were both of them evidently struck and troubled with the argument; nor did they see, I believe, any way of evading the force and cogency of it. At length Mrs. Wynne said, in a subdued, but rather ironical tone, " Nobody will reason as you do, Dr. Warton, or think it necessary to make the effort of which you speak." " No," I replied, in sorrow, " alas! no; at least the generality will not; nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand will not. Scripture affirms this, and experience proves it. Death overtakes them in this state of blindness, and they never have a glimpse even of any better system of life. They never seem to think that this world is preparatory to another, and therefore, instead of bending all their faculties towards the acquisition of the virtues and graces necessary for that other; they chain themselves down to this, and cannot elevate one thought above it."

" Well, for my part," she exclaimed, " I must confess, Dr. Warton, that I never before met with anybody half so harsh and severe as you are. In your pulpit it may be allowed; in common conver-

sation I have not heard anything like it. Milder ways might be found of saying the same things, if they must be said." "Yes, my dear Madam," I replied, "but without effect. I cannot consent to fritter away the most awful truths, and destroy all their force by studiously searching for mild expressions. It would be unworthy of my character and office to do so. I must not be one of those who prophesy smooth things, however the people who hear me may wish it. I should neither save *them*, nor myself; I should ruin both. But you permit me to be severe in my pulpit. Well, my dear Madam, I am in my pulpit now; at least I am in the discharge of one branch of my ministry, which requires something like preaching; that I should utter the solemn voice of warning to the young who come before me, and guard them against that friendship with the world which is enmity with God. If this effect were wrought upon them, they would not blame, they would rather bless, my harshness and severity, which brought their duties and their dangers home to their very bosoms and consciences. Playing upon the surface will not do; we must get to the very heart and affections. We know the terrors of another world; and therefore we must strike deep."

"But, Dr. Warton," interposed Mr. Wynne hastily, "as you like to analyse, *do analyse our*

actual proceedings, one by one, and let us see what there is so terrible about them." "My dear Sir," I replied, "if *I* could find nothing terrible about them, it would not relieve the great world from the fearful ban which I have mentioned from Scripture. They will be tried by one who has more piercing eyes than I have; one who knows the good and great things of which every man is capable, and who counts all that fall short of their capabilities, absolute sinners. But, I fear, the most indulgent and short-sighted person *must* see enough in the ways of high life, to make him tremble for those who walk in such ways. I will analyse, however, as you command me to do it. How, then, for instance, do they spend the Lord's day?"

"*We* have come to church, ever since we have been here, with the greatest regularity," exclaimed Mrs. Wynne in triumph; "I hope that pleases you, Dr. Warton." "It pleases me very much," I replied, "and is also generally useful in the parish. But, I am sorry to observe that we are making this question too personal, so as to increase the apparent harshness and severity which you lay to my charge." "Never mind," she said, fancying herself, no doubt, unassailable; "never mind, Dr. Warton, our own case concerns us most; and you have full liberty from *me* to go to the bottom of it." "First, then," I resumed, "it must be mentioned, that I have never seen you at church in the

afternoon." "It would be highly inconvenient to us to come in the afternoon," she replied, not quite so confidently. "We *contrive* to come always in the morning, be it convenient or inconvenient to us; but we cannot *contrive* it in the afternoon." My look showed that I was not satisfied; so she continued. "People *will* call upon us, Dr. Warton; and sometimes we are *compelled* to go out ourselves to call upon our friends." " *Compelled* is a strong word, my dear Madam," I said sardonically; "you surely do not mean that any positive violence is used, either to make you receive some, or visit others." "It would be rude," she replied, "to deny ourselves to visitors, or to send them away in a hurry; and, if we would keep up our acquaintance, we *must* visit *them* in return." "On Sundays, my dear Madam?" I said: "Are there not six days for civilities, and one for religion?" "We *cannot* spend every moment of it in religion;" she answered rather petulantly; being pressed, no doubt, by the argument. "Alas!" I said, mournfully, "we *will* not. But see, we slide back to the same fallacy, that our acquaintance must be kept up; that we cannot refuse to receive visitors without rudeness; that we cannot dismiss them in time to go to church; all which means, that we must live as the world lives. The question is, whether the world is in the right, and we can only justify our-

selves by appealing to the practice of the world. This is all in a circle; the reasoning is palpably bad. Scripture says, ‘Be not conformed to this world;’ but we think all wrong that is not in conformity with it. If we cannot deny ourselves so far as to come to church on a Sunday afternoon, how little likely are we to assume courage enough to pluck out an eye, or cut off an arm! But this self-denial is the very essence of the Christian character, and there is no hope without it. Yet none of your men of the world ever think of it. Their only maxim is self-indulgence. Were you to talk to them of taking up the cross, would they not cover you with ridicule? Yet, unless they do it, they are lost. Let them show me where it is written, that the pleasing and being pleased is the sole object for which God sent us here, and the only road to heaven.”

I spoke this with great earnestness, and then paused; but they were quite mute. So I summed up the investigation of the fashionable mode of passing the Lord’s day thus:—“If there were nothing else to condemn the world before God, this is more than enough to condemn it,—that they profane his own day, which he has commanded us all to hallow. Not only do they not frequent the divine ordinances of the day as much as they might, (by which voluntary neglect they put themselves out of the way of numberless opportunities

of receiving divine grace, and being advanced in Christian holiness,) but they absolutely profane the day; at least, 'bating the morning-service, they spend that day very much as they do any other. They dine abroad; they give great dinners at home; they seek the throng of company in the public drives, with the whole pomp of their equipage, whilst the sun is up; and when he is down, some fashionable lady holds an assembly at her house, where it is their glory to be seen. The whole establishment, even the servants and the horses, all break the Sabbath; but these by compulsion. The master and mistress are guilty for all, because they act by their own free will."

They were still mute, but very uneasy. I went on again, and struck home. "I dare say, my dear Madam, you are scarcely aware of the ramifications of this Sabbath-breaking. I will tell you a little history of what happened in your own case last Sunday." They were both roused, and exclaimed with impatience, "What is it, Dr. Warton? Let us hear what it is, we beg of you." "On Monday morning," I said, "when I visit the charity-schools, I inquire very accurately which of the children have been absent from Church the day before. Last Monday a little girl was brought before me under a charge of this kind. I questioned her as to the cause, and her answer was, that she was forced to stay at home to nurse the

baby, whilst her mother went to Mr. Wynne's, to assist the servants in preparing a great dinner."

"Why, you know, Dr. Warton," said Mr. Wynne, with a quite altered manner, as if he felt less secure than he had done before, "we cannot depend upon our parliamentary friends so well on any other day." "Ah! my dear Sir!" I replied, sorrowfully, "now we are going back again, as we continually do, to the same assumed necessity of doing some worldly thing. Why our parliamentary friends should expect us to break the Sabbath for their sakes, I cannot understand. I am sure it would be much better for themselves too, to spend the day tranquilly in the bosom of their own families. Public men, I fear, have a good deal hanging about their consciences, which it might be well for them to reflect upon, calmly and religiously, on the sacred day of rest from business, graciously allowed them by God himself. The ambition, the party-spirit, the truckling to power, the feuds and animosities, the dishonest eloquence that confounds right and wrong, might well require a pause, not to be recklessly abused in prodigal luxury which drowns all sober thought, but to be carefully employed in a serious and solemn investigation of their own conduct, with the view of adopting nobler principles, and pursuing sounder systems of action founded upon the basis of religion. Were this to take place uni-

versally, would our dear country be the worse for it? Are eating and drinking to be compared with this? I fear that a vast deal of this eating and drinking is bad on any day, and irreconcilable with our religion. On Sunday, I am sure, it is all bad. When I consider, but for a moment, what *He* said, whom we are lost if we do not obey in the true spirit of his commands,—namely, that when we give dinners, we must not invite our rich neighbours, but our poor ones,—I am astonished and totally incapable of conceiving how *they* intend to justify themselves who seem to have no other object but splendid living, and expend upon self-gratifications and worldly vanities, a revenue which might feed thousands, and cause poverty to sleep on a bed of down."

Mr. and Mrs. Wynne became now more and more disturbed, and Mrs. Wynne exclaimed, "Not a creature is safe, Dr. Warton, if *your* doctrine is correct." "Then you infer, my dear Madam," I said calmly, "that my doctrine is incorrect; but this is a fallacy. It may be very true that no creature is safe, and yet equally true that my doctrine is correct. Surely, you cannot suppose, that, because a vast number of persons agree in the same features of character, God will not condemn them all, being so many as they are. A human magistrate perhaps would only decimate them, because he would be fearful of making too

great a void amongst his subjects, which he could not fill up. But God destroys whole worlds, and creates new ones by a single word ; he has only to say, Fiat, and it is done. Have we forgotten the universal deluge, when he destroyed all the families upon the earth but one ? No creature is safe, unquestionably, who conforms to the world rather than to *his* laws ; and, unquestionably also, reasoning as I did before, when we see a very large order of mankind, all acting upon one and the same worldly principle of life, we cannot but be sure that such a condition of things is the very conformity with the world denounced in Scripture, and that the denunciations apply to *that very order* in a most especial manner. Few, my dear Madam, in any order are safe ; in the order of which we are speaking not a creature is safe but by abandoning the principle upon which the whole order acts. This the mass will never do to the end of time ; so our Redeemer has told us ; but a few perchance, or a single one, like Lot, will do it ; discovering their error, bursting through worldly prejudices, and making good their retreat in time, before time is lost in eternity."

" But where are we to retreat to, Dr. Warton ?" she exclaimed again. " I am perplexed beyond measure, and cannot think what is to become of us, or what you would have us to do." " Why, it is true," I said, " there is more facility in showing

that a particular system of life is wrong generally, than in defining the exact boundaries within which the intercourse of social life may be securely cultivated, and, as a natural consequence, the various accomplishments which make that intercourse improving or agreeable. That I do not proscribe society and accomplishments altogether, I have expressly said ; it is quite foreign to my notions to send men back to barbarism, or to monkish cells and seclusion ; the essence of my scheme is social activity and operation within a certain sphere ; but it is not so easy to say what the sphere should be, or what the qualifications to move in it with propriety, and dignity, and usefulness. I fear, however, that my scheme, stopping short, as it must do, far short of the present practice, would not be liked but by those who have been educated for it. I wish, therefore, that I had your concurrence to interest the mind of this young lady betimes in favour of it, which might save her a bitter repentance hereafter : for a person wedded to the world must repent bitterly, or be lost for ever. And the chances are against repentance ; because such a person, imperceptibly formed and gradually rooted by habit, is the last to see the necessity of it. The eye, in fact, is no longer capable of seeing with a single and correct vision ; everything done in the great world is harmless and innocent in its sight."

“ But would it not be equally perverse, Dr. Warton, to condemn and avoid everything belonging to the world as mischievous and wicked ? ” Mr. Wynne inquired. “ Should we not thus become Evangelicals, and Methodists, and Puritans at once ? ” “ It is a perversion of the judgment,” I replied, “ whenever we form a wrong opinion of anything. But in this case the error would be on the safest side. My recommendation, however, is, to distinguish carefully between the harmless and mischievous ; and not to condemn and avoid every practice of high life, but only the wicked, the mischievous, and the dangerous. If you ask me what these are, I answer, by way of giving one specimen, that the spending Sunday in any respect as a common day, when we all know that it is consecrated to God, is not only dangerous and mischievous, but positively wicked. Not to spend it partly in attendance upon the divine ordinances, and partly in domestic privacy, is, in my judgment, positively wicked. I exclude from that day all assemblies which put the streets into a hubbub ; all dinners which keep an unusual number of servants from church ; all, in short, except to family connexions, or to single persons, who come to us for the very purpose of joining with us in public worship. I exclude all travelling, all use of horses and carriages, except to carry us to church when the weather is unpro-

pitious, our health bad, or our age advanced. I exclude all card-playing, all newspaper-reading, all music that is not sacred."

"Stop, Dr. Warton, pray stop," exclaimed Mrs. Wynne, in a trepidation. "You will leave us absolutely nothing." "Certainly," I said, "if possible, I will leave you nothing to hurt you, or to make you odious in the sight of God. You must approve my principle at least; and in the application of it the less latitude we allow ourselves, the better it will be for us. It might do us much harm to make a mistake in allowing something which ought not to be allowed; it will do us none to be called Puritans, provided we are conscious to ourselves that we are sincere in what we do. The Puritans were guilty of most abominable hypocrisy; cannot we do right without being hypocrites, weighing well beforehand every practice that we reject, and every practice that we adopt, and trying them both by the unerring rule of Scripture? With respect to Sunday, I am persuaded that there is no real difficulty in carrying everything into effect which I have mentioned; and, if it were done, what a monstrous burden would it remove at once from the consciences of all who now act differently! How completely it would change the whole aspect of high life! Nay, it would shed a sort of sanctity on much that is done on other days. Not that the well-doing of one

day, even of God's own day, will redeem the ill-doing of any other day ; but it would instantly prevent a great deal of ill-doing on other days ; it would gradually abolish a great deal that now prevails ; it would leave nothing in the end that we know to be wrong, nothing but what we suppose to be indifferent, or of dubious importance at least ; and then, I think, God would pardon all the wrong which we might do unwittingly, and I am sure he would bless with his especial favour all that is right. May I ask you, my dear Miss Wynne," I said, turning towards her, and speaking with the greatest gentleness, " whether what I have said has convinced you, that the renunciation of the world, undertaken for you at your baptism, and now about to be confirmed by yourself, cannot, with all the latitude which we might be inclined to give it, permit safely, by any possibility, such a lax, tumultuary, luxurious, profane method of passing God's sacred day, as now predominates in the fashionable society of the neighbouring town ?"

At this question Miss Wynne's countenance, naturally pale, was instantly tinged with a rosy blush, and her eyes, unable to meet mine, were depressed to the floor, nor did she utter a word. A struggle of some kind or other was evidently going on in her breast. I thought I understood it. I would not allow myself for a moment to suppose,

that her perplexity arose from any doubt which she entertained of the justness of my arguments, or from any difficulty which she felt in adopting them for her own guidance. But in declaring that she coincided with me, she must necessarily set herself in opposition to both her parents; this was painful to her, no doubt, and how to manage so delicate a matter, with due caution and filial respect, was, perhaps, the occasion of her silence and distress. I ventured to assume, after a very short pause, that this was the right interpretation, and then to relieve her from the anxious situation into which I had thrown her, I said smiling to Mr. and Mrs. Wynne, "Now, I am sure that Miss Wynne will be no opponent to the adoption of a new system in your family. I am sure," I said, raising my tone, "that if you were boldly to determine to break through the trammels and shackles of fashion, and to spend Sunday as it ought to be spent, making it what God commanded that it should be, a day of holy quiet, a day of rest, that is, and a day of religion, this young lady will be quite ready to fall into your new plan with perfect cordiality; she will not complain, I feel confident, that every seventh day, so spent, will be too dull and monotonous for endurance; she will not regret the absence of any week-day pleasure; she will not be impatient to rush into gay, thoughtless crowds, to dissipate as soon as

possible the grave and solemn reflections which were suggested at church ; she will relax from the tone of devotion acquired there to nothing but calm domestic enjoyments ; she will be glad that she neither harasses the poor brute creation, for which the great God himself does not disdain to care, nor the lowest menial servants, who have a soul to save as well as ourselves, and who ought not, therefore, to be compelled by *us* to violate the divine laws ; she will rejoice to give them leisure to study, and to study herself, the inspired word of God, which is interesting and momentous to us all, beyond the power of language to express, or thought to conceive ; and, I trust, it will be a still greater joy to her to see the whole family assembled around her at the close of day, mingling in supplication, in gratitude, in praise, to Him who is the author and giver of every good thing, and in whose hands is the life and breath of every one of us. Such a mode of spending the Sabbath here would be a real preparation, and most likely to qualify us for enjoying everlasting Sabbaths hereafter. It would act forcibly upon the entire week besides ; and unless I am very much mistaken, we should soon begin to curtail that enormous waste of time and money, which now makes one of the heaviest articles in the account between God and the whole fashionable world.

“ With respect to time, indeed, as it is now

generally squandered, he will condemn them out of their own mouths: they talk of *killing* time; it is a terrible expression; in the very use of it they stand self-convicted of an utter ignorance, or wilful forgetfulness, of their true condition, and of the awful end which is advancing upon them apace. How to *kill* time! The good ministering angels hear them say this, and sadness bedims for a moment their faces, that should beam for ever with light and joy. Time! It is to be husbanded with the most scrupulous care, without throwing away a single particle; it is the most precious of things, because it is short itself, and yet terminates in a long eternity, and, therefore, the more short, the more precious. Will God judge us, do you think, for a few idle accidental words, and connive at the habitual waste of whole hours, and days, and weeks, and years? He must be mad who lulls himself into such a stupid security."

I was now working up my mind to a great feeling of indignation, not precisely suited to the occasion; so I paused here to control it, and thus surrendered the lead to any one who might choose to take it; but they continued, all three, blank and silent; and two of them at least, I had no doubt, would have been glad to have been far away from this unexpected lecture, however profitable it might be to them, if they attended to it, and received it in the right spirit. Not despairing,

at any rate, that some good might be done, I resumed my argument thus, in the quiet tone of conversation.

“ My dear Mr. and Mrs. Wynne,” I said, “ the waste of money is the next general sin of high life, and of other ranks which are seduced into the imitation of high life. It is too obvious to escape anybody’s notice, like the waste of time. There is an extravagant waste of it visible to the most careless observer in almost everything; in dress, in eating and drinking, in horses and carriages, in servants and liveries, in the whole equipage and establishment and mode of living. This condemns the system of the great world and all the imitators of it at once; wherever there is extravagant waste of a valuable thing, which, being otherwise employed, might alleviate the sorrows of God’s creatures, guilt is contracted of a deeper or deeper dye, in proportion to the selfishness, the ostentation, the vain-glory, actually exhibited on the one hand, and the means and opportunities of doing good omitted on the other. There is positive and negative sin here which accumulate the guilt of the misapplication of God’s bounty. I will tell you another little history. A widow, with a good jointure, had enough for many of the splendid luxuries of *haut ton*, and she lavished it upon them with all imaginable ardour; but it mortified her that, with her other expenditure, she

could only afford two horses to her carriage. This lady had persons nearly connected with her by relationship, who struggled hard with a narrow income to maintain the outward respectability of their family; and there was great and severe pinching at home to do it. A little self-denial on *her* part would have put them quite at their ease. But, no; so noble an economy seemed never to have entered into her imagination; all her desire appeared to be to enlarge, and not to contract, the scale of the display which she made; she talked of nothing else but of the delight which it would give her, not to make her relations happy, but to add the second pair to her stud, and to drive four-in-hand, or with two postillions. Nay, she was prompted to this by the very tenderness of her feelings, as she would persuade you to believe. ‘Poor creatures!’ she would say of her two coach-horses, ‘I absolutely *feel* them draw! I sit quite in pain to see them and feel them strive, as they do, to drag the carriage along, whilst they pant continually for want of breath! What a relief it would be to *them* and to *me*, if I had but two more!’ Will you credit me when I inform you that this misplaced, perverse humanity, or rather, pretended, mawkish sympathy with the brute creation (for vanity was the real motive, without doubt), was actually carried into effect. A silly son, to indulge her in this very particular (at least

such was the result), added a few hundred pounds to her revenues, and forthwith she alarmed the villages which surrounded her mansion with the trampling and the speed of her four horses. She was now no longer sensible of any painful exertion on their parts to transport her from place to place ; there was nothing to jar her nerves, or unhinge her delicate, tremulous constitution ; she sat in a sweet tranquillity, and her happiness was perfect ; but her relations, being only of human kind, went on struggling as before, unheeded, unassisted, undeplored. Think you now that Heaven did not look on, or looked on with complacency ?”

“ Dr. Warton,” exclaimed Mrs. Wynne, the instant that I stopped, “ you have a satirical and a terrific way of describing things, which makes them appear much worse than they really are. Surely there is no harm in driving four horses, if we can afford to do it ; and if it costs more money, it saves some time ; so there is a gain in *that*, at any rate. The unhappy lady, too, whom you ridicule and criminate so severely, might have had reasons for not helping her relations, of which she herself was the best judge, and with which *we* have no right to interfere. At all events it is uncharitable to censure her without knowing the facts ; you surprise me in doing so, Dr. Warton.”

“ Undoubtedly, my dear Madam,” I said, “ it is

better to abstain, generally, from censuring our neighbours. I willingly honour that sentiment. Indeed, Scripture commands us to judge not, that we be not judged. When there is so much of wrong about ourselves, the true wisdom would be to search it out and cast it off, and to let others alone to stand or fall by the decision of their proper Judge, who will interfere effectually, whether we do or not. But a person of my calling is peculiarly circumstanced; and, although he has no right to interfere with the opinions or actions of particular men maliciously, or to exercise his powers of satire, yet he has an unquestionable right to interfere with them for their own good, or the good of others. If he mentions names, he must take especial care to be acquainted with all the facts; if not, it is sufficient to represent matters as they appear outwardly; and it will be well for the persons concerned, if they should be able ultimately to explain them in a better and more favourable manner to the Judge of whom I spoke, and who knows indeed the very truth already. The facts of my present case I believe are strictly correct, and I only spoke of them for the illustration of my argument, with that sort of feeling which they seemed to warrant and require. If I have been unjust, I have been unjust only for *your* sakes."

"For *our* sakes, Dr. Warton!" she cried, has-

tily, and rather angrily ; “ I really do not understand you. We have no poor relations, and we never use four horses at once, except on some very particular occasions, and when we are making a distant journey. It would be ostentatious, I grant, to do it on common occasions, and for mere show ; but *that* is not our practice. And I should think that your case suits others as little as it suits us ; it is an extreme one, and probably suits nobody but the single person whom you have in your eye.”

“ Alas ! my dear Madam,” I said, sorrowfully, “ I fear it suits multitudes. There are thousands, perhaps, who drive only a pair of horses, and there are as many who have no poor relations ; but what I mean is this : the adding more horses is only a general description of vain, extravagant expenditure, and the overlooking poor relations is an instance of neglect of duty, which makes the vain, extravagant expenditure amount to a double crime. There are millions of ways of neglecting duty, and there are millions of ways of spending extravagantly ; and in general we can discern them plainly enough in the cases of others, but not in our own. Our vision is telescopic and microscopic, both magnifying their faults, and bringing them near ; but we invert the instruments to view ourselves, and throw our faults to so vast a distance that they are no longer visible. You will probably say that your own expenditure does not

exceed that of persons of the **same** rank; but in the question between us this proves nothing; because I am contending, not that one person spends more than another in the same rank, and therefore spends extravagantly, but that all spend extravagantly; that the lowest scale is a sinful waste: which position being true, as is evident to our own reason when we examine the matter impartially and accurately, I understand then very well what Scripture means by those awful frequent declarations of the perilous spiritual state of the rich, and the consequent necessity of not being conformed to this world, if we would be saved out of it. Nevertheless, the great majority *will* conform to it even to the end, and of course, therefore, few only will be saved. This is what I would impress upon this amiable young lady, at an important period of her life, when she is yet free to choose her own path for herself."

Silence ensued here. Mr. and Mrs. Wynne appeared to be beaten at all points; whether convinced or not, they would not or could not contest the matter with me any longer; so I remained sole and entire master of the field of battle. Still they did not get up from their chairs, or even propose to go; the business, indeed, for which they came being yet incomplete. In this situation of suspense, the combat was revived by my fair youthful catechumen herself. "Dr. Warton," she

said with a most engaging sweetness and modesty, “ you invited me in the beginning to examine *you*, which you kindly told me would be better than being examined myself by you. It seemed impossible to me then that I should ever venture to ask you a single question, but I am tempted and encouraged now to do it.” “ I am sure,” I replied, “ I shall be most happy to answer all the questions which you may be inclined to put to me, as far as I am able; and you may depend upon my frankness and sincerity.” “ I know I may, and I rely upon it,” she resumed. “ Put it to the test then,” I said, “ without delay.” “ You have described so much in detail,” she replied, “ how Sunday should be spent to avoid profaning it, that I clearly understand you; but what is to be done with respect to the week days? I have no sufficient guide for *them*. Time and money are not to be wasted; but this will be a most difficult rule to apply in every case. You said, indeed, that the well-spending of Sunday would act upon the other days, and cause them to be well-spent too; but why, and how, Dr. Warton? I am very desirous to learn this from you, if you will take the trouble to explain it to me.”

“ It will be no trouble to me,” I said, “ but I think it will be scarcely necessary to do it. Experience will be the best teacher. Begin with Sunday, and mark what new impulse the keeping

it holy, as God has commanded, will give to your own thoughts, feelings, desires, and resolutions; and then obeying the impulse, gradually carry all these fresh impressions into effect. Undoubtedly you will become more and more Christian, and almost daily lay the foundation of still further improvements in the Christian graces. If you abandon, one by one, many of the pleasures now thought most delightful, or most fashionable in the world, never mind; you will be continually providing for yourself ample resources, and real enjoyments in exchange, which will not be transitory, but durable. If you never go to an opera or dance at Almack's, I promise you, you will be much happier without such amusements. But I will not leave the matter entirely to your growing experience; I will give you beforehand one exemplification of my theory, which would probably be the first change, in point of fact, that a person would make, who spent Sunday properly. I speak of a person in your own rank."

"Oh! tell us this by all means," Mr. and Mrs. Wynne exclaimed both at once; and Mrs. Wynne added, rather sarcastically, "I shall be *so* glad to see, by anticipation, what we are all likely to come to, if we take your prescription, Dr. Warton." "Depend upon it," I said, laughing, "if you take it cordially, it will put you into a sound and healthy state." Then checking myself, I con-

tinued, “ but it is really too serious a matter to be witty upon, or even for a smile. It overwhelms the very imagination in the attempt to conceive the vast interest that we have in settling it correctly. But to the present point. The first consequence of spending Sunday well is most likely to be the desertion of the Opera on Saturday night.” She started at this, and held up both her hands with every token of surprise. I persisted, nevertheless, unmoved. “ The frequenting the Opera on Saturday night, and the spending Sunday well,” I said, “ are two things quite incompatible, and the one, whichever it may be, will certainly overturn the other. At different times I have had families in my parish fond of the Opera, and I rarely saw them at church on Sunday morning.” “ I am sure,” said Mrs. Wynne, interrupting me, “ you have never missed *us*, even when we were at the Opera the night before.” “ No,” I replied; “ I have not certainly; you have been here a short time only; but by coming home so late whenever you did it, you broke in upon the Sabbath-morn, and were guilty of an early despite to the sacredness of the day. I am perfectly aware that you intended no such thing; but the thing was done nevertheless. You see, my dear Madam, that I cannot argue the question properly without speaking plainly, and, therefore, I must appear to be, what you called me before, very harsh and severe;

but, if I am right, (and I think I might defy the acutest reasoner in the world, not being an infidel, to dispute successfully against me,) the conclusion at which I arrive is the only thing which merits your attention, and it merits all the attention which you can give it. I cannot repeat too often that it is tremendously momentous. Now I go on. You come to church after the opera; but probably you have not had your natural sleep; the music, the singing, the dancing, have haunted your memory, waking or dreaming; you have got up in a hurry, two or three hours before your usual time, and dressed in confusion; and at last you have hastened away without the calm, private prayer, perhaps, almost without breakfast, to be in tolerable time before the Psalms are finished; at length the bustle being ended, you are heavy and drowsy, and wish the service over; your eyes close involuntarily, or your mind is continually distracted, and your thoughts wander back too often to the gay tumultuous throng, which you left but a few hours before."

"Are you *really* describing *me*, Dr. Warton?" she exclaimed, interposing with a sort of nervous agitation. "And do you *really* think that your description is a correct likeness of *me*?" "Excuse me, my dear Madam," I replied in a soothing tone; "I am ^{not} describing no particular person; I do, indeed, say *you*, which makes my accusation

appear to be personal; but I am describing the natural and inevitable tendencies of the mode of life which is fashionable in the rank to which you belong. Multitudes do not come to church at all after the opera; the contrast is too great; the *égarement de l'esprit* is so entire and total; the mind cannot be composed again so soon into a frame and temper fit for devotion and conversing with God. And of those who *do* come, if there be one solitary instance, I am sure there can be but few, who are so tremblingly alive to their own perilous state as sinners, and to the awful means adopted by inflexible justice for their salvation, as to apply themselves with due seriousness, and with every other proper feeling, to the solemn business for which they come. The minister of Christ opens the sacred service with this striking sentence, perhaps—‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.’ Can this accord with *their* disposition, who have but just quitted the light effeminate music that stirs up gaiety or love, and the indelicate, not to say lascivious dance, to which nothing could reconcile a pure eye but long-corrupted habit? Where were you last night? I would ask them,—With what sights, and with what sounds, did you gratify your eyes and ears? What were your thoughts, what were your imaginations, during the exhibition?

Are you so soon entirely changed, as to acknowledge now with a deep and cordial sincerity, that you are miserable offenders; that there is no spiritual health or soundness in you; that your transgressions are ever before you; that the broken spirit and contrite heart alone become you; that you are lost for ever without them? My dear Madam, this is next to impossible. There may be a decent external behaviour at church, undoubtedly, under any circumstances; they may sit, stand, and kneel, as the rubric directs them; they may resist every tendency to drowsiness or impatience; nay, they may even listen to, and admire the discourse from the pulpit, and be affected by it; but where is the real internal devotion of the heart? The consciousness of seeking before all things the kingdom of God and his righteousness? The humiliation of sinners, the contrition of penitents, the annihilation of all self-opinion and merit, the clinging to the merits and intercession of Christ alone? These are mighty concerns, my dear Madam, and require peculiar impressions upon the mind, to be kept, too, as much as possible, in their full force and operation. Alas! the necessary business of life has a sad and powerful tendency to make them fainter and fainter, and even to erase them altogether; shall we add to this, unnecessary frivolities, distracting dissipation, enervating pleasures, saturating, un-

hinging luxuries, at the very moment too, or just preceding it, when those impressions are of most consequence to us? Yes, even when we have previously determined to approach the table of our Lord, and partake of his body and blood? Oh! it is too glaringly inconsistent! Excuse me, my dear Madam, such a religion is worldly; it is not spiritual."

It might have been evident now to the most careless eye, that Mr. and Mrs. Wynne were both of them deeply shaken; but Mrs. Wynne exclaimed, with a sort of self-gratulatory tone, "I have never done *that*, Dr. Warton. I have always considered it to be a proper thing to make a particular preparation for the Sacrament, by a course of reading and prayer. No, no; I have, perhaps, a more serious feeling of religious ceremonies, and especially of the Sacrament, than you seem inclined to ascribe to me. Neither myself nor Mr. Wynne ever went to the Opera before the Sacrament, I assure you. In *that* at least we agree with you."

"I am truly glad of it," I replied, with an air of manifest satisfaction; "it rejoices me extremely to hear this; it is an excellent foundation to build upon. Why, my dear Madam, you may easily raise a beautiful structure upon this, which will reach heaven itself; and if I could guarantee to you so uncertain a thing as a human life, I would

be content to tell you to raise the structure, story by story, part after part, until all its fair proportions and just magnitude are at last perfect and complete. I would not shock your prejudices, and deter you from the attempt to build at all, by contending that the whole structure must be raised at once and without a moment's delay. No, no ; I should be liable to the charge of sewing a piece of new cloth upon an old garment, and thereby making the rent worse. I would increase the chances of success by accommodating my advice to the different tempers and habits of different persons, and endeavour to advance them, by little and little, and by slow steps, according to their power of bearing it. Indeed, I may justly seem to have done so in the present conversation ; I have recommended that Sunday should be hallowed, and have trusted that other improvements would quickly follow. My dear Madam, I say, quickly ; for I cannot ensure your life for a single instant, and it infinitely behoves us all not to have the Christian character to acquire when our life is demanded of us. It will be well indeed for us, in some way or other, to be found, at that awful moment, in a gradual progress towards it. But we shall have no good apology for our deficiencies, as the early Christians had. They were necessarily educated in different principles, which were all to be unlearnt before they could embrace Christianity

with a cordial feeling; whereas *we* have been educated in it, or ought to have been so; *we* ought to have no principles to unlearn, and no prejudices to overcome; *our* path should be smooth and easy before us from the first to the last. Alas! however, my dear Madam, we have ourselves wilfully erred and strayed from it. Can we do better, then, than recover it again without delay, and hasten along it with an additional speed, deviating from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that we may not be overtaken before we are sufficiently advanced?"

I do not know that I had much more to say, or that the discussion would have been prolonged by *them*; but so it happened, that some new visitors were admitted in this crisis, and our conference immediately broken up. Mr. and Mrs. Wynne departed, no doubt, with very different notions from those with which they had come; but, besides, I augured well of the whole event. With respect to Miss Wynne, I was entirely satisfied. I was quite certain that no common occurrences could possibly eradicate, or scarcely weaken the effect which had been produced upon her mind and heart. When I took her by the hand as she went away, her looks implied most intelligibly everything that I could wish; conviction, and even gratitude, and delight. My last words to her were, "There remains but little to be said to you

now, although I may seem to have said nothing to the purpose for which you came to me. Perhaps I have done better than to pursue the usual course. However, I will think about it, and say a few words more, when I bring you the certificate." She smiled, and thus we parted.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. KING—SECTARIANISM.

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§ I.—MR. KING.

ONE of my curates, lately engaged, having preached, in his turn on the Sunday afternoons, several sermons consecutively upon the moral duties, it came to the ears of Mr. King, a gentleman of independent property acquired in business, who had been long resident in my parish. This Mr. King had some peculiar notions of his own in religious matters, and was very lax in his adherence to the church. When he heard of these sermons, it seems, he was exceedingly *irate*, and determined to quit the church altogether. What is remarkable, he had never been in the habit of coming there in the afternoon, and, in consequence, had scarcely ever seen my curate in the pulpit. His constant practice had been to come in the morning, when I was the preacher; in the afternoon he stayed as constantly at home, and went in the evening to a dissenting chapel in the neighbourhood, to which he was closely attached. His conduct therefore in seceding entirely from the

church, under these circumstances, represented him to me in the light of a man acting rather as a partisan than upon conscientious principles.

When I observed that his absence from morning-church was not occasional, I sent a message to him to say that I wished to have some conversation with him. Accordingly he came to my house; and, after the common salutations, I said, "Mr. King, I have never seen you at church lately; pray tell me what is the reason of it?" "Oh, Sir," he replied, without hesitation, "there is such a difference to me now!" "What is *that*?" I inquired eagerly; "I am quite at a loss to conceive what difference you mean." His own particular circumstances of coming only in the morning were full in my mind at the moment, and drew forth this question from me. "Do you ask me, Sir!" he said, with apparent surprise; "why, have you not engaged a curate who is a mere moral preacher?" "I do not believe anything of the kind," I answered; "but, if it were even so, what of *that*?" I asked. "You never hear him; and therefore I cannot see what difference it makes to *you* at least individually. In the desk, indeed, you *do* hear him; and certainly I should have thought that *there* you would have hung upon his lips with delight; for, in power and tone of voice, as well as in gravity and dignity of expression, he exceeds perhaps all other clergymen. For my own part,

I have never heard one whom I think equal to him. In short, it was this very excellence which induced me to select him for my coadjutor; he was otherwise quite unknown to me. It has always appeared to *me* to be of the very utmost importance that the service should be performed with a loud, a distinct, a solemn, and an impressive voice; for it is this service, in fact, alone which constitutes the worship of God in our churches. The discourse is comparatively of less consequence; not that I by any means would wish to undervalue or disparage it; God forbid! And I think, indeed, that you must at least allow me the credit of taking some pains about it myself. But still the service is the great and essential thing; and it is only that we take advantage of the presence of the congregation assembled for worship to preach to them about the doctrines and duties of their religion. The preaching itself, you see, is but incidental and secondary. Looking, therefore, to the principal object of coming to church, the offering up of our prayers and praises to the great Being above, it is evident that, so far as *you* are concerned with my curate, it is almost impossible for you to have a better."

I paused to give him time to speak, if he wished it. He seemed indeed twice or thrice to be saying something; but I could not ascertain what. My opinion about the comparative value of reading

and preaching I was quite sure would not meet with his concurrence. There is a sort of rage for preaching amongst all classes ; and amongst dissenters more especially everything else is set almost at nought. I was glad therefore of the opportunity of turning his mind to the subject, and of showing him what appeared to me to be the correct view of it. It is really a lamentable thing, and has at length arrived at this mischievous point, that without a sermon a respectable congregation cannot be obtained, and that the clergy themselves, carried away by the stream, pay less attention to the art of reading than the immense importance of it demands.

Mr. King being silent, I resumed the thread of my discourse. "With respect to preaching," I said, "it is very likely that my curate, even with his fine and clear voice, may not please everybody upon all subjects. But again I say, what does *that* signify to *you*, Mr. King ? You never come in the afternoon to hear him. I protest, I never once saw you even by the greatest accident."

This statement of mine it was utterly impossible for Mr. King to deny ; but at first he was not confounded by it. Indeed, he gave me an explanation, which he seemed to think would bring him off with triumph. It was this : his sister and children were desirous of being present at both services ; and it was only to the afternoon service

that it was possible to send the servants ; but it was necessary at the same time, for some reason or other which I forget, that one of the family should remain at home ; this duty therefore he had himself undertaken, rather than impose it upon another, because for evening worship he had his little chapel to go to at a later hour, in the neighbouring parish. "And I assure you, Sir," he said, "that, in consenting to this arrangement, I made a great sacrifice. My family could not all go to church so conveniently in any other way ; and so I was forced to give up the afternoon service." "Very well, Mr. King," I replied ; "what you tell me is, without doubt, perfectly true. I will suppose that you had the best motives in the world for absenting yourself from the afternoon church-service. But the mere fact is the only thing now in question between us ; and this fact is, that you *did* really absent yourself, and consequently did *not* hear the discourses of my curate. I ask therefore again, what, in point of fact, is the difference of the present circumstances to *you*?"

Mr. King now began at length to feel the difficulty in which he was involved. He was, in short, completely thrown on his back ; and, whilst he was floundering about, I preserved an entire silence, being not at all disposed to help him. However, after humming and hawing for some time, he said, " You must excuse me, Sir, but the

thing is this: whilst your curates went on *tolerably*, I was content to come to church, as I did; now, since *that* is not the case, my feelings are so changed, that I could not come to my edification.” “*That*,” I answered, “is pretty much what I supposed, Mr. King. *My* doctrines are the same which they have always been; and from *our* pulpit here you have heard of late no others; but you have taken an offence against my curate, and in consequence you now view everything through the mist of prejudice and passion. You are angry with *me* on my curate’s account; and for that reason, I dare say, you see *my* doctrines in a new light. Is not this so?” “Not exactly, Sir,” he replied; “to confess the truth, I was *never* satisfied with your doctrines.”

It was now very evident to me that I had been hitherto only *tolerated* by Mr. King and a few others, for some reason not at all easy to be explained. But, having reflected for a moment, I determined not to press him any further with the charge of an apparent inconsistency in his conduct. It might irritate him, and widen the breach between us; and it could do, I thought, no good whatever. I applied myself therefore to what he had last said about my doctrines; and I told him that I was not aware of my doctrines being different from the doctrines of our church; and, indeed, that I should be extremely shocked if they were.

“Good works, for instance,” I said, “and every Christian grace springing from faith,—I preach, I think, as much upon such subjects as the clergy generally do.” “Yes, Sir,” he replied, “you are a great advocate for good works; some may suppose too much so; but the minister should never forget the essential doctrines of the Gospel.” “And do *I*, Mr. King?” I inquired eagerly. “Have you never heard me explain and enforce the moral and religious uses of these doctrines, on the respective days appointed for the consideration of them? I was fond enough to fancy that I had on many occasions so represented them, as to give you clearer ideas of them; to elevate and exalt your conceptions of them; and to fill and warm you with livelier sentiments of gratitude to God, and more active desires of conforming to the divine will. If I have failed in this point, I feel the disappointment the more deeply in proportion to the zeal and study which I have bestowed upon it.”

“Oh! Sir,” he exclaimed earnestly, “I have never denied, nor can I justly, that your discourses on the great festivals, and similar occasions, are very sublime indeed. We all agree in admiring you on those days; but, in general, we do not hear so much as we could wish on the saving truths of the Gospel. Often you seem to keep them out of sight altogether. But, Sir, we always look up to the pulpit in expectation of hearing

how we may be saved ; and then, instead, you tell us that we must practise this or that virtue. We want to get to heaven, Sir ; and you talk about good works, which sinners, such as we all are, cannot trust to, or cannot perhaps perform ; and so we go away disappointed and dissatisfied, and longing for the true bread of life.” “ Aye, aye, Mr. King,” I said, “ I understand what is the matter. You would have me always harping upon the same string. But I must leave that system to the conventicle, where, I fear, the same words and the same phrases are so often repeated in the ears of the people, that, without understanding them, they begin at last to attach a saving efficacy to the mere use of them. The Gospel is not a single point, Mr. King. It embraces a wide extent and a vast variety of particulars, and it enjoins numerous duties. Whatever the divine Author of it and his holy apostles preached about, it must be at least equally necessary for the Christian minister now to preach about ; and *he* perhaps would discharge his office best who should neglect no branch of his subject. The Christian minister should be like the householder whom our Lord commends for bringing out of his treasure things new and old ; and his hearers should be thoroughly furnished by him to all good works. Persons of taste, too, are soon wearied and disgusted with the same viands, and they depart

from the church without any accessions of intellectual strength, or moral and religious principle, and consequently without any appetite to come again. Few, but the very ignorant, can bear to have the same things perpetually dinned into their ears, and therefore I wonder that *you* can bear it, Mr. King. However, there is one doctrine which makes perhaps the most prominent feature of the Gospel, that Christ came into the world to preach repentance, and thereby to save sinners, a doctrine of which, I think, I can hardly ever be said to lose sight. I have preached often expressly upon it, and it comes incidentally into almost every sermon. But, my good Mr. King, to enable men to understand even that single proposition, and to profit by it, must needs require much explanation, much instruction, much caution against error; and it is the same nearly with every other proposition, which, if not of equal importance, should have its proper rank nevertheless assigned to it in the weekly discourses from the pulpit."

Mr. King appeared to listen with the greatest attention to all that I said, but without surrendering his own opinions; so I put the question directly to him, and desired him to specify particularly which of the saving truths of the Gospel, in the course of an experience of perhaps two years, he had observed me to omit. "As you press me so closely, Sir," he answered, "I will

certainly tell you ; and I must be free to say, that I never once heard you mention the doctrine of imputed righteousness, which, in my judgment, is all in all." " This is very strange," I said ; " strange if I have never mentioned it, as you lay to my charge ; and still more strange, if I *have*, without your noticing it, when the doctrine in your opinion is of supreme moment. However, I am quite certain that I have often mentioned it." Then, suddenly recollecting myself, I unlocked my cabinet, and after a short search, I produced two or three sermons, in which his favourite words, " imputed righteousness," were expressly used. I made him read the passages himself ; and, what is rather remarkable, they were drawn up so loosely, that is, so vaguely, and so agreeably to the common but mistaken form of expression, that they conveyed, I believe, the precise sense in which he himself understood the doctrine, although, in fact, not the doctrine of Scripture. Once more, therefore, Mr. King was thrown upon his back ; and at first I was somewhat inclined to reproach him with injustice ; but I moderated myself, and only said, " See, Mr. King, how careful people ought to be of laying to the charge of any minister, that he does not preach the saving truths of the Gospel, when you yourself, as attentive a hearer, perhaps, as any body, have missed the very doctrine which you conceive to be most important, and which you

have fixed upon, in consequence, as a doctrine, the supposed omission of which constitutes a just ground of accusation against your own minister. How this has arisen in *your* case I cannot pretend to explain; but in the case of many others, the saying of the Prophet is, I am sure, very applicable; ‘hearing, they hear not; and seeing, they see not;’ so deaf and so blind do their prepossessions and party-spirit make them. It has been said, for instance, in some evangelical publication, that the Gospel is not preached in this parish; the consequence of which is, that any evangelical stranger, happening to be at church, is prepared by his antecedent prejudices, when he sees *me* ascend the pulpit, to condemn my discourse altogether, be it what it may; and on the following day, it is very likely, he favours me with an anonymous letter on the subject, and accuses me of not preaching the Gospel. It is not impossible that my discourse might really have contained nothing about some doctrine which is a peculiar favourite with him; but why should he have expected it in a single discourse? And if the discourse had been entirely upon good works and moral duties, what better right could he have to say, that I was not a Gospel-preacher, than to say it of Jesus Christ himself, when he preached his sermon on the mount? If, indeed, I were to preach that men might be saved by their works,

or that works have merit in the sight of God, and may boldly claim a reward from him ; then indeed I might very well be set down for one of those who are contemptuously called your moral preachers ; but I never in my life preached any such doctrine, nor was disposed to do so. I know the value of the cross of Christ, and what we owe to it, too well, to set up anything else against it. Here, take this sermon, (I reached the uppermost from my cabinet,) and read it at your leisure. It was preached in your absence last Sunday morning. It is upon the doctrine of human merit, and will clearly show you my opinions on the subject. Yet after all, Mr. King, you can never get rid of that text which tells us, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; nor of the frequent declarations of Scripture, that we shall be judged according to our works, and for all the things done in our bodies, whether good or bad ; nor of the fact, that our blessed Redeemer himself, who must have known best what was the effect of his own death and passion, still in his description of the last judgment, decides the everlasting destiny of mankind, by their regard to, or neglect of, deeds of charity. Under these circumstances, therefore, to omit to preach about charity, and other good works, and purity, and holiness ; or to slur them over, as if they were of very inferior importance in the system of God's dispensations, and mere

filthy contemptible rags to be cast away in disdain, would be a most shameful and dangerous dereliction of duty in any minister; and by his thus preaching a part only, and not the whole of the Gospel, as he ought to preach, I think he would be answerable for many souls that might in consequence be lost."

I had now been speaking for a considerable time, and wished to give him an opportunity of taking his turn, if he desired it; so I paused, and he said immediately, "Ah! Sir, this may seem very right and proper; but after all we must lay hold of the righteousness of Christ; we cannot be saved, unless *his* righteousness be imputed to ourselves." I was glad that he had mentioned this phrase again; both because I was confident that he had mistaken the real import of the doctrine, and because I myself might have been liable to the charge of stating it inaccurately in those passages which I had shewn to him. But I had been carried on by the warmth of contention, and had totally forgotten it. Very opportunely, therefore, did he recall me to the subject, and I inquired at once, whether he understood 'imputed righteousness' to mean, that Christ's obedience, and innocent life, and holy conversation, were to be reckoned our own; so that whether we ourselves are obedient or disobedient, innocent or guilty, holy or unholy, it matters not, because of

this righteousness of Christ being imputed to us. “ Certainly I do,” was his answer; “ and a most comfortable doctrine it is to us all.” “ Then I fear,” I said, “ that I shall be obliged to rob you of the comfort of it; for most assuredly it is not the doctrine of Scripture.” “ Not the doctrine of Scripture!” he exclaimed, loudly and vehemently. “ Why you perfectly astonish me, Sir. I have been brought up in this doctrine, and I have lived in it; and it is my only consolation. And do you really tell me, Sir, that it is not to be found in Scripture? Why does not St. Paul say this very thing of himself?” “ No; *that* he does not,” I replied. “ Pray where did you suppose him to say so?” “ Permit me, Sir, to look into your Bible,” he answered. “ By all means,” I said, “ And here is the Epistle to the Romans, in which you may expect, perhaps, to find the doctrine.” “ Yes, Sir,” he answered; “ it is there undoubtedly; but I will show you first a passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, which will convince you in a moment.” “ I suspect,” I said, “ that I know already what passage you mean; and if so, it is *that* very passage which has convinced me to the contrary.”

Whilst Mr. King appeared to be wrapped in utter amazement at my assertion, I turned to the 9th verse of the 3d chapter, and read it to him; and he acknowledged it immediately to be the

text which he had in his eye. "Very well then," I said; "let us now study the context." So I read also the verses connected before and after with the 9th verse; upon which he exclaimed, "Well, Sir, does not St. Paul here renounce all righteousness of his own?" "Yes," I answered; "but what sort of righteousness is it, that he renounces? Observe, it is the righteousness which is of the law." This could not be denied, because it is expressly said; so I continued, "This righteousness which he renounced was a mere outward thing; his circumcision, for instance; his belonging to the sect of the Pharisees; his strict compliance with all the Jewish rites and ceremonies; and every distinction which he had obtained above the rest of his countrymen, by his superior zeal and knowledge with respect to the traditions of the fathers. He was now aware that all this could never save him, and indeed was of no value to him whatever. No; he was now aware that he wanted a far different sort of righteousness; an inward righteousness; a purity of the heart and conscience; a holy frame and disposition of the very soul; which could only be wrought within him by the Spirit of God; and that Spirit was not to be had but by his becoming a Christian, and embracing the faith of Christianity. Look again, Mr. King; this is the righteousness, in which St. Paul desires to be found. He discards with dis-

dain the righteousness of the Jew, in which he had formerly gloried ; he pants after the righteousness of the Christian, to be sought by faith in the Christian covenant ;—where is anything said of Christ's righteousness being imputed to him for his own ? —not a word anywhere."

Mr. King was as a man thunderstruck ; or as one, whose tower, which he had built, was falling about him in ruins. He was speechless. I endeavoured to rivet his conviction by the following questions. " Did you ever hear, Sir, of persons wicked enough to pursue the interests of the kingdom of Satan ?" Not seeing the drift of this question, he answered simply, that he had both heard and known too many of that character ; and he seemed to be relieved from his embarrassment, as if we were beginning a new conversation on a new topic. I went on, " Are not the interests of Satan's kingdom pursued and promoted in a most effectual manner by everything that we call sin and wickedness ; by the vices and the crimes of mankind ?" He allowed it readily ; I continued. " May not this be done by teaching or encouraging vice in others, as well as by practising it ourselves ?" He was not disposed to deny it. " Suppose then," I said, " a person were to come to us, and to tell us, that he was sent by God ; and that he had suffered in our stead the punishment, which we ourselves deserved on account of our sins ; and moreover,

that he had fulfilled the whole moral law of righteousness; and that all *his* perfect righteousness should be freely imputed to *us*; so that *we* need not fear any punishment hereafter, or trouble ourselves about having any other righteousness. I ask you, whether such a person, if he could persuade men to act upon his doctrine, would not be a promoter of sin, and thereby of the devil's kingdom?" He hesitated a little, beginning to suspect danger; however, he said that he would not deny the proposition as *I* stated it. "Well then," I proceeded, "suppose again, that this same person required us to believe what he said; and told us also, that the whole efficacy of his imputed righteousness depended entirely upon our belief of it; I ask you, whether the consequence would not be, that the more firmly we believed in him, the less should we strive against our own lusts and passions, and the several temptations of this world; and the more we doubted about the truth of his doctrine, if we had any fears of another world, the more should we cultivate piety and virtue in ourselves, and study to increase the happiness of our fellow-creatures, and to do everything which we might think likely to please God?" By this time it was impossible for Mr. King not to see plainly to what a precipice I was leading him; so he was much disturbed, and declined answering this last question, before he had been able to con-

sider it thoroughly, and expressed a fear that he had granted too much already without due deliberation. "I think not," I said; "but if you have the slightest difficulty as to answering any further, I will not require it of you. I will draw the conclusion myself."

"Observe then. If your sense of imputed righteousness be the true one, the case just stated applies precisely to the blessed Author of the Gospel himself. But I am sure you will agree with me in pronouncing it blasphemous to ascribe such consequences to any doctrine of *his*; and thereby to insinuate that he came into the world to destroy it, rather than to save it. No, no; he never told us that his own good deeds should by faith be as much ours as if we had done them ourselves, and that we should be as abundantly rewarded for them; or that all our crimes and habits of sins should do us no mischief, if we would only assure ourselves that his robe of righteousness was thrown around us. He told us no such things; but, on the contrary, that he came to destroy the works of the devil, and to rescue us from the evil dominion of our lusts and passions, and to create a new man within us; that is, a true, positive, inward purity and righteousness of our own. He might, indeed, I grant, according to *your* interpretation, cover us with his pure robe of righteousness, and thus unconditionally deliver us

from eternal death, and carry us to Heaven; but this would be to accomplish only the half of what I suppose to have been the whole grand and glorious design and undertaking of *his*; namely, to carry us to Heaven, and to fit us for it; to fit us for it by actually purging our bosoms of all iniquity; by extirpating from our hearts every bad passion and principle; and by implanting there in their room the divine seed which produces righteousness, and holiness, and godliness. For this being first done, then we might be capable of the pure bliss of Heaven, and of contemplating with joy unutterable the ravishing spectacle of the Holy One himself; but Heaven would be no Heaven to *that* man who should go there shrouded under Christ's robe, with all his own natural corruptions, and all his own acquired sinful habits about him. The happiness of Heaven he has no sense whereby to taste; it would be gall and wormwood, a plague and torment to him.

“ Certainly, therefore, my good Mr. King, you must have mistaken this doctrine of imputed righteousness. But what surprises me most is that you have not actually observed in persons who are of your opinion, and with whom you are acquainted, the evil effects of this way of interpreting the doctrine. For example; two or three are in my eye, but I will mention only one. We are by ourselves, and speaking confidentially.

There is Mr. Storry ; he frequents your meeting-house, or some other where similar doctrines are preached and inculcated ; and, as might naturally be expected, he follows the bent of his ruling appetite, which is to get drunk almost daily ; and as for keeping his word or promise, he seems to care not a pin about it. Yet he has always a Scripture-phrase in his mouth, which he perverts, I should fear, to his own destruction ; for, unquestionably, he has at least two sins clinging to him, against which Hell and damnation are awfully and positively denounced. Well, having some dealings with this gentleman, I ventured to remonstrate with him upon his habits of drunkenness ; and he applied your doctrine at once, telling me, without reserve, that he looked for salvation to a better righteousness than his own. He clearly therefore expected that Christ's imputed righteousness would save him, be his own life whatever it may. I ask you then, Mr. King, is not this a doctrine that must do the devil's work, unless people themselves are too good to act up to the latitude which it gives them ? Nothing can be more positively declared in the Gospel, than that all drunkards shall be barred out of Heaven ; and yet your friend Mr. Storry thinks to slip in unobserved, in the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness."

" Oh ! pray Sir," exclaimed Mr. King, with

animation, “do not call him my friend. I have no friendships with men who lead bad lives.” “No, Mr. King,” I said; “you are yourself a very sober, respectable, and upright gentleman; wishing, I really believe, to model your conduct by the laws of the Gospel and the pattern of Christ; and therefore you do not so easily admit or see the torrent of evil which flows from this doctrine. In the very act of reaching forth towards a greater degree of Christian perfection, you obtain a more intimate knowledge of your own defects; and you are glad therefore, as you say, to lay hold on the righteousness of your Saviour, which you do, not to abuse it, but for your comfort and support. But others begin at the wrong end; and assuming that Christ’s righteousness will be imputed to them, what need they more? Is it wonderful that they should launch out into all wickedness?

“But it is time to state the true doctrine.” “Aye, Sir,” he said, “let me hear it, I beseech you.” In the tone of this short speech there was something so very unpromising, that I much doubted, after all, whether I had made any progress towards Mr. King’s conviction. I have often had occasion to remark in such persons a self-complacency in their own opinions which it is very difficult ultimately to disturb. There appears to be always a something in reserve; something not brought out; indicated perhaps by a smile or by

a shake of the head, which resists and outweighs the most cogent and solid arguments. So I feared it might be with Mr. King. I had overthrown his text entirely, and made him tremble for the safety of his whole position ; but to abandon it was another thing ; and also to abandon it to *me* might be too painful."

However, I proceeded. " You mentioned, Mr. King, that there were passages in the Epistle to the Romans, which decided this question. Did you mean some of those in the fourth chapter ?" I inquired, pointing them out with my finger. " Yes," he said ; " we shall find several of them." " Very true," I rejoined ; " there are several passages about imputed righteousness, but not a word about the imputed righteousness of Christ. See here.—The third verse tells us, that Abraham believed God, and that it was counted unto him for righteousness. Counted and imputed are the same thing ; but what has this to do with *your* doctrine ? In the fifth verse we are plainly informed what the true doctrine is ; namely, that faith is imputed for righteousness ; not that any other person's righteousness is imputed to *us* for our own righteousness, but that our own faith is imputed to us for our own righteousness ; which is precisely the same proposition as to say, that we are justified by faith ; a proposition which no orthodox Christian disputes, but a very different

proposition from yours, Mr. King. Again, in the sixth verse we are told, that this righteousness may be imputed without works, meaning the works of the Mosaic law, which St. Paul himself so utterly disclaimed, as having nothing whatever to do with his justification. But we need not inquire what works are meant; *that* would be entering into a different question; it is sufficient to mark now that the righteousness spoken of, whether with or without works, and whatever be the works intended, is nothing more than our own faith. All the rest of the passages hold the same language, and are exactly of the same import; and there is not one of them, no, nor one in any part of Scripture, which furnishes the slightest foundation for such a notion as yours of imputed righteousness; so that in whatever degree you may be attached to it, yet you are bound to abandon it. Who, in short, will retain *that* which leads to pernicious consequences; which is contradictory to common sense, and which is not to be found in Scripture, or deducible from it? After all, then, we come to this; and it is a doctrine sufficiently comfortable for us, without any additions or inventions of our own; namely, that our Christian faith (always remembering such a faith as is the principle of obedience), or, in other words, that our sincere, although imperfect obedience, springing from a well-grounded faith in the Gospel, will

be put to our account just the same as if it were absolutely perfect righteousness, and will be accepted and rewarded accordingly, for Christ's sake, by a God of infinite mercy."

When I had arrived at this conclusion, Mr. King, dropping tacitly all further discussion about his own doctrine, without either re-asserting it, or candidly confessing himself to have been mistaken, allowed however that he should have had no objection to this doctrine of faith being reckoned for righteousness, if I had not clogged it with works, and made God's acceptance of it appear to be a debt rather than a free gift of grace. "Do you think then," I asked, "that a thing given ceases to be a gift, or a free gift, or a matter of grace and favour, if conditions are annexed to it, and qualifications required in those to whom it is offered?" "Perhaps," he answered, "you may still call it a gift, but it may justly be doubted as to the rest." "Suppose," I said, "that I were to give notice throughout the parish, that on a certain day, I would distribute crown pieces amongst all the women, and that I required no other condition or qualification on the part of those who applied for my bounty, but that they should be women and not men; the men I utterly exclude. What difference does this condition make with respect to my gift being free and a matter of favour or not?" He hesitated; so I asked again,



“ Have I not power to give or to withhold? May I not do what I will with mine own?” “ Undoubtedly you may,” he said. “ Had these people,” I inquired, “ any claim to the crown piece, or any expectation of receiving it from me, before I gave notice of my intention?” “ It does not appear that they had,” he answered. “ Well, then,” I said, “ how can it be denied, that my gift is perfectly free and entirely a matter of favour?” He was unwilling, but he could not refuse to allow it. “ Let us go on then,” I said, “ and let us suppose that, instead of offering the crowns to the women indiscriminately, and merely excluding men, I offer them only to the women who were past seventy years of age; what then?” He made no reply, so I continued, “ I will draw the inference for you, Mr. King. As these old women had no previous claim upon me, my bounty, although thus limited, is still a free gift, and purely a matter of favour. But I go further, and proclaim that I will not bestow it upon any old woman who has ever been seen drunk. Had all the sober old women of the parish who were arrived at three-score years and ten, a right to demand this crown of me?” He could not assert that they had. “ Very well,” I said; “ then it is still a free gift, and a matter of favour. But now suppose that the thing given were not a crown piece, but a ticket of admission to see a most magnificent and

glorious sight, which would fill the spectators with astonishment and delight; and to hear the most sublime and enchanting music, which would wrap the souls of the hearers into elysium; would it not be very proper to limit the tickets to those who were fit and qualified for the nature of the enjoyment to be expected?" He could not deny it. "Well then," I said, "if I exclude the blind and the deaf, and tell them, that these pleasures would be no pleasures to *them*, because they are not qualified for them, does my gift become less free? Who has any right to expect such an entertainment from me? In short, was the feast given by the king, in the Gospel, to all the miserable beggars and vagabonds, picked up in the highways and hedges, less a free gift because he required them to come in a wedding-garment? Had all persons, who could obtain a wedding-garment, a right to be admitted to any feast at all?" Thus I poured my questions upon him; and as he did not reply, I said, "You see then, Mr. King, that the annexing conditions to a gift, and requiring qualifications in the applicants for it, detracts not at all from the free bounty of the donor; nay, it is more likely to magnify and to exalt his glory. Suppose a rich man were to come through our town to-day, and to scatter purses of gold about the streets, to be scrambled for by those who would;—do you think that any would get the

money, and afterwards spend it in the alehouse, abusing it to drunkenness?" "I should fear," he answered, "that many would do so." "Suppose again," I said, "that another rich man were to come to-morrow, and to search out the sick and needy, the pious and industrious poor with large families, and distribute his money to such objects only, and adjust it also in proportion to their wants or their deserts; which of the two rich men would you commend?" "There could be no doubt about it," he replied. "And," I asked, "would you not call the conduct of the one lavish, and foolish, and mischievous; and *that* of the other bountiful, wise, and useful?" "Certainly I should," was his answer. "And was not this latter," I continued, "as free to bestow his money in this noble and considerate manner as the former was to throw it in the dirt?" He assented. "And observe too," I said, "that the townspeople have no reason to expect that rich men will come, and distribute their wealth amongst them in any way; so that upon the whole, to give under conditions, and to persons with proper qualifications, adds to the glory of the giver, and diminishes not the free grace and favour of the gift."

Mr. King began to be terribly alarmed; for he now saw to what a conclusion I was approaching. Lest therefore he should depart abruptly without hearing it, under pretence of business, or for any

other cause, I hastened to finish my argument, and said, "A few minutes more, and I have done. Apply this reasoning, Mr. King, to the great moral governor of the universe in his dealings with men. They were lying in a state of corruption, darkness, and ruin; and if they expected anything at the hands of their Maker, it ought to have been punishment and death. Certainly, whilst they were transgressing daily the great laws of reason and nature, which were written in their hearts, they could not expect his favour. Here then his undeserved goodness and mercy began to act freely and graciously towards them. First, he sent his own son to suffer punishment and death in their stead, that his justice might be satisfied and his wrath appeased; and the whole race of mankind reconciled to him, and restored to the capacity of everlasting happiness. But, secondly, as it was sin which had occasioned their fall, it was necessary that they should be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and follow after holiness, without which there could be no happiness for them, either here or hereafter; and without which also in God's kingdom upon earth there would be no vestige of beauty, order, and harmony; but all would be confusion, and wickedness, and misery, as before. This holiness, therefore, which was an essential qualification for happiness, he made also the condition of the

application of Christ's merits to individuals. But alas! how were they to become holy? What means were there, not supplied before, which might be likely to make them new men? We are redeemed, indeed, they might have said almost in despair, we are redeemed by the atonement which Christ has made for our sins; but the eternal life and happiness which we long after, and which is only to be attained through holiness, is as much out of our reach as ever.

"Here then God freely and graciously interposed again. In the Gospel he set before them the most perfect rule of duty, according with their most improved reason, and suited to their best feelings. Of this rule also the Saviour himself, clothed in the human nature, exhibited the loveliest and most attractive pattern; and he unfolded besides, in the course of his ministry, so many and such motives to holiness, as might well awake the most secure and profligate sinner out of the slumber of death itself. So far, however, no more was done than to enlighten, and to attract, and to urge, and stimulate men, by the most efficacious methods indeed, but without any positive help from above. Next then comes the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in the hearts of those who seek for him, and, by his mighty co-operating influence, to work this essential quality of holiness within them; to begin, that is, with enabling them to break their chains,

and to burst forth from their disgraceful enslavement to sin, and to taste the glorious liberty of the children of God ; and afterwards to carry them onward from sorrow, remorse, and contrition, to a real repentance and reformation of life ; and so again progressively from strength to strength, from virtue to virtue, from glory to glory, until the whole holy edifice of the perfect Christian should be built up and finished in them. Thus, then, by this supernatural aid, is that degree of holiness which God will accept and reward, and which is at the same time his own gift, within the reach of all ; and if all were so far holy (not to say perfect), how happy would even this world be, and how worthy of its Heavenly Maker, whose name and nature are holy ! Tell me not then, Mr. King, that faith, upon my system, is clogged with good works, as with some dead weight to destroy its efficacy ; or that the gift of a Saviour is less free, because God requires holiness in us, as the condition of profiting by that Saviour, as the proof and the fruits of our faith, as the instrument of our present happiness, and to qualify us to sit with Christ in mansions of spiritual bliss for ever. In truth, faith is the first link in the golden chain of the Christian graces and virtues ; but, if our faith by God's blessing be firmly settled and rooted in us, then, as a natural consequence, shall we strive unceasingly to add link to link, not stopping at

the first, and to become holy as God is holy. Human frailty, however, although with this extraordinary assistance of the Holy Ghost, must needs fall short of so perfect a consummation ; yet we need not despair ; our faith, being of such a species, shall be imputed to us for righteousness. Here is the exhilarating comfort, the reviving assurance, for all the humble-minded who still feel their deficiencies ;—our faith, working by love and obedience, sincere but imperfect, shall be accepted nevertheless as perfect righteousness, and justify us in the sight of God. Knowing therefore, as I do, Mr. King, the terrors of the Lord, so awfully denounced in almost every page of the Gospel against all sin and ungodliness—and seeing how constantly and how forcibly repentance, and holiness, and good works are inculcated in the same Gospel, and how necessary they are to the peace and happiness of mankind in this world, and to qualify them for Heaven in the next,—I shall never cease my most strenuous endeavours to persuade men to practise these things ; not as if God would be obliged to them to be so kind as to practise them out of compliment to himself, but as an essential, immutable condition of their present and everlasting welfare. Pray reflect upon this at your leisure, Mr. King ; and also read over the sermon upon human merit which I have put into your hands. I shall be glad to see you another

time ; for the present, good bye to you." Thus I dismissed him ; and he departed without any observation, apparently happy to be released.

On the following Sunday he was at church. This looked well ; but, unfortunately for my scheme of making a proselyte of him, I preached upon a favourite doctrine of my own, which was no favourite of *his* ; *that* of universal redemption. He was so near me, that I plainly saw his uneasiness, which was also increased by another unlucky circumstance. There was an old gentleman at church on the same day, as warm a partizan of orthodoxy and high-church principles as Mr. King was of latitudinarianism ; and who was not contented with making a mental application of my arguments to Mr. King, but turned round repeatedly, and, with a sort of sarcastic, malicious smile, fixed his eye upon him, and appeared to triumph in his imaginary chastisement and defeat. Nothing could be further from my thoughts than to make a personal attack upon Mr. King, whom I did not indeed expect to see on the occasion of preaching that discourse ; but the discourse, and the behaviour of the old gentleman together, decided, I believe, the question of Mr. King's total secession from the church. In a few days afterwards he sent back my sermon on merit ; and for a long time I saw no more of him, either at church or elsewhere ; nor did I think it worth while to at-

tempt to force him to a second conference, before I might perceive some favourable symptom in his case. I spoke however now and then to his sister, who with her family was as regular as usual at church; but she assured me that there were no hopes of him.

§ II. MR. KING AND OTHERS.

After an interval of some months, I was again brought into contact with Mr. King, by an endeavour on his part, in conjunction with a Mr. Harris, his neighbour, and of the same principles with himself, to set up an auxiliary Bible Society in my parish. They came to me one morning together, and brought with them a Mr. Barker, who seemed to be a very well-mannered person, and who, I found afterwards, had a respectable rank in the adjoining town, and a villa near to it, but who was in no way connected with *our* affairs, or with anybody here. Being warm, however, and enthusiastic in the cause of Bible Societies, he was a frequent attendant at meetings assembled for such objects, and always ready to lend his services, as an orator, or a chairman; and this being known to Mr. King and Mr. Harris they had engaged him to come from a

considerable distance to help them in the formation of their committees,—to pay *me* a visit, and talk this question over with me.

My visitors being all seated, Mr. King opened their business. “ We thought it a matter of respect and duty, Sir, to wait upon you about a branch Bible Society, which is much wanted in this, and the surrounding parishes ; and this gentleman, Mr. Barker, who has had a great deal to do with business of that sort, has been so kind as to accompany us.” “ I am glad to see you, Mr. Barker,” I said immediately ; “ but I am ashamed to confess, that I was quite ignorant, that any person of your name resided in our parish.” “ I am not a resident here, Sir,” he replied, “ and it is therefore no wonder that my name is not familiar to you.” “ Upon my word then, Mr. Barker,” I exclaimed, “ I must tell you candidly, that I am not a little surprised, (and I showed my surprise in my countenance,) that you should come into a parish, with which you have no connexion, to talk with the rector of that parish about the distribution of Bibles amongst his own poor. And I am surprised at *you* also, gentlemen, that you should bring a perfect stranger to me upon an affair of that kind ; you know very well that I have not desired such assistance ; for, in fact, I do not want any. But, if I wanted assistance ever so much, I should never have thought of going out of my own

parish for it. I have no wish to offend you Mr. Barker; but does it not strike you in an instant, that there is an apparent want of propriety, and decency too (if you will excuse me) in the step which you have taken?" "It may seem so to you, Sir," he replied, "and to the world; but the thing is too important to admit of entering into minute and trifling circumstances of etiquette. As the spread of the Bible should overleap all boundaries, but those of the world itself, so it swallows up every other consideration, which must needs appear in the comparison, mean and little. Mr. King, however, will explain to you, Sir, the immediate cause of *my* share in the present undertaking."

Upon this I turned from Mr. Barker to Mr. King, and said, "Mr. King, how is this?" "Why, Sir," he answered, "myself and Mr. Harris here, have been round the parish to every gentleman of property and respectability in it; and there was not one, who did not decline to preside at the intended meeting; so, Sir, we were compelled to look elsewhere." "Did the gentry of this parish," I asked, "merely decline the presidency, or refuse altogether to have anything to do with your projected society?" Mr. King and Mr. Harris eyed each other askance, and after a short silence Mr. Harris confessed that they objected to the thing altogether. "And did they assign any reason, Mr. Harris?" I asked again; "you, I know, will

be fair and open enough to tell me if they did ; and also, what the reason was." This appeal to his candour produced the effect expected from it ; he replied immediately, " I must confess, Sir, again, that they appeared to be unanimous in saying that the application ought to have come from the rector ; and some added, besides, the conviction which they felt, that if the rector had considered such a society to be necessary, he would have established it, or proposed it long ago." " Thank you, Mr. Harris," I said ; " thank you for informing me of this fact so readily, and without any tergiversation ; but then I am astonished at two things ; first, that you should have begun at the wrong end ; and secondly, that you should be still proceeding in this affair, when you have ascertained the sense of the respectable part of the parish, in point of wealth and the disposition to do good, to be entirely against you." " If *you* would take the lead, Sir," he answered, " we have no doubt that many will join us of those who have for the present refused ; and we should have come to you, Sir, in the first instance, with the greatest satisfaction, if we had not had the very strongest reasons, as we thought, for supposing that you would scout our proposals at once." " Then pray, let me ask," I said, " what has procured me the honour of this visit now ? "

A silence ensued,—Mr. Harris and Mr. King were very reluctant to let out any more secrets ; so

Mr. Barker being more inured to the artifices of Bible Society transactions, and spurred on by a zeal not to be daunted by any fear of being accused of disregarding the civilities of life, took up the conversation, and said, “ We are come here, Sir, in consequence of an interview which we have had with the bishop of the diocese. These gentlemen, whose conduct is so praiseworthy in endeavouring to bring the pure word of life, without note or comment, into the cottages of the poor, not having found, as they have told you, a single person here, of authority, to promote and organize so Christian a work, applied to *me*, although of little ability for so great an undertaking; and I have obeyed the invitation, trusting in a mightier strength than my own. But first, Sir, as the bishop has some property in your parish, and happened to be in the neighbouring town, we waited upon him, at *my* suggestion, and proposed to him the glory of patronising the sacred cause so becoming his episcopal cloth.” “ Surely,” I said, interrupting him, “ there must be something peculiarly blinding in this rage for Bible Societies, or you would have seen, at the first glance, the strange impropriety of going to the bishop on such a subject. You, Mr. King, are an acknowledged dissenter from the church; and Mr. Harris, without doubt, is the same; as I understand, he has preached several times at Methodist chapels in our neighbourhood;

may I be permitted to inquire what *your* opinions are, Mr. Barker?" "Oh! I am a churchman, Sir," he answered, without hesitation. "Yes, Sir," I said, "and it is very likely that both Mr. King and Mr. Harris might make the same assertion; for I have seen them both at church, and Mr. King, indeed, very regularly; but pray tell me whether you do not generally attend the chapel of Mr. Lovebairn, who is a Calvinistic preacher in your village?" My conjecture was verified. He confessed that he went there sometimes; and he extolled Mr. Lovebairn, as a most eloquent, experimental, and edifying preacher and expounder of Scripture. "Very well," I said; "be it so. But did you inform the bishop that you three gentlemen, being absolute seceders from his church, or very lax churchmen indeed, were come to instruct him in the duties of his episcopal office, and to urge him to fulfil them?" "No, Sir," replied Mr. King, "we did not take upon ourselves to talk to his Lordship in that presumptuous manner." "Did you, or did you not," I inquired, "conceal from him the fact of your sectarianism, or your leaning thereto?" "He did not ask us," said Mr. Harris, "and so we did not mention the matter." "Did you tell him," I inquired again, "that Mr. Barker, your adopted leader, was unconnected with this parish?" "We had no opportunity of telling him," said Mr. King. "Very

well, then," I continued; "these premises being settled, I should now wish to hear, if you have no objection, what answer the bishop gave to your proposal?" "I have no scruple, Sir," said Mr. Barker, "to tell you my opinion, though I mention it with sorrow, that the bishop did not see the glorious career that was before him. He entrenched himself, Sir, within little petty forms and ceremonies, when the question concerned the universal diffusion of the Word of God. He asked us whether we came to him with *your* authority; and when he found that we did not, he declined listening to any of our arguments; pleaded urgent business, and sent us away." "Very well, Gentlemen," I said; "I now perceive sufficiently the reason why you have at length come to *me*. Your eyes are opened at last. The same answer, given universally to your application, by all who think that Bible Societies should not overturn the established modes of proceeding amongst gentlefolks; and, moreover, that the rector of a parish, constantly upon the spot, is most likely to be acquainted with the want of Bibles amongst his parishioners, if there be any such want, and also most disposed to supply it, as well as most able to devise effectual means of doing so; this general answer has shown you, what a moment's thought might have shown you, that to take up an affair of this sort without any communication whatever

with the clergyman, is, to say the least of it, a very underhand, clandestine, and unworthy proceeding. Of this, therefore, I suppose by your coming to *me*, you are now convinced ; but I believe also, it has occurred to you, that if the meeting take place, and any person present should question you about *my* sentiments, you would be ashamed to answer, as well you might, that you had consulted everybody else upon the subject except *me*. But be it so ; I pass over all this ; let us come to the point, Gentlemen. What have you to say about the necessity or expediency of setting up a Bible Society in this parish ?”

“ *Here*, Sir,” replied Mr. Barker,—“ not to dwell upon the grand and godlike object of the parent-society, which is to preach the Gospel in all the languages of the world, and to turn men from gross darkness to a marvellous light,—*here* is an exact account, Sir, of the state of your parish with respect to Bibles.” I took it into my hands, and whilst I was glancing my eye over it, I inquired how it was obtained. “ It was obtained, Sir,” he answered, “ by sending trusty persons to every house, to investigate the matter with the closest and utmost possible accuracy.” “ So then, Mr. Barker,” I said, “ *you*, a gentleman not belonging to *us* in any way, have sent persons into *our* parish to act the part of inquisitors in every private family ; and these inquisitors have furnished

you with a report, whether true or false you cannot know, but of course you will call it accurate; and on this report, stating a great lack of Bibles, you ground your pretence for a still further interference with us. Well, Sir, this is undoubtedly a most extraordinary transaction; I will not venture to call it by its proper name, as I feel it. And pray, did you direct your inquisitors to tell the poor people, that their spiritual interests and the welfare of their souls being entirely neglected by their natural guardians, the bishop of the diocese, and the resident ministers and gentry, you had beheld with compassion, from a neighbouring parish, their forlorn and destitute condition, and had stepped in to relieve it with an unparalleled generosity and charity?"

Here I should observe, that as I did not wish to break up the conference till I was fully informed of their views and proceedings, at the same time that I thought it right to let them know my sentiments as to their conduct, I assumed rather a playful air of railly at the moment of making a severe observation; which had the desired effect of softening things down a little, and thereby prolonging their stay; whilst the sting, I hoped, would remain, and create reflection at home. In the present instance, Mr. Barker said, " You are inclined to be jocular with us, I believe, Sir; but at all events we do not arrogate to ourselves any

especial generosity or charity; nor do we wish to throw any discredit upon others." "Well, but," I inquired, "was not the very act of your investigation the decided proof of a doubt, on your part, whether the rector and the rich inhabitants of the parish did their duty in furnishing the poor with Bibles? and is not your present intention of calling a meeting tantamount to a declaration, that we have been tried in the balance, and found wanting? And, I ask, can all this be done without bringing a sort of discredit upon us, and setting our people against us, and lessening, if not destroying, the salutary influence which we have over them?" "Very well, Sir," he answered, "if this be your fear, you may get rid of it at once, by taking everything into your own hands. We will put ourselves immediately under your entire direction." "Oh! I thank you," I said; "you have done half the mischief already; and now you would compel me in a manner to become a Bible-Society-man, in order, if possible, to stop the rest. This is very ingenious, Sir; but it will not succeed with me. Indeed it would not answer the object of preserving our credit; for shrewd persons would give us no thanks, but accuse us of being driven into the measure by the dissenters of our own parish, and the strangers of another. But all this is waste of time. I have looked over your list; and I am confident that it

is full of errors; I will not say intentional; yet, how they could have crept in, I cannot explain: it is for *you* to do *that*, if you can. The names and circumstances of my poor parishioners are so far known to me, that I cannot easily be deceived. To bring the matter to an issue between us, I lay my finger on the name of Cullen, and I am morally certain that there is no want of Bibles in *that* family. The old widow Cullen is a school-mistress, and not likely to be without a Bible; and her son, who lives within a few yards of her, has had two or three children in the charity-schools; and I recollect very well that Bibles and Prayer-books were given to them, when they were dismissed; and those children are still at home with their father."

In point of fact, upon inquiry, I ascertained, that the Cullens had three Bibles; but that the old lady, upon the recent death of her husband, had given up to her son the family Bible, in which the births of the children were inscribed; so that, strictly speaking, she might be said to be without a Bible of her own; her son's, however, and all the Bibles of her scholars were at her command daily whilst at home; and as she was too rheumatic to stir out to church, or elsewhere, she wanted no Bible to carry with her abroad. These circumstances I communicated, by letter, to Mr. Barker; and no doubt I might have found other

cases, if I had searched for them, in which the statement of a lack of Bibles was equally fallacious. Indeed it had too much the appearance of a stalking-horse ; it seemed as if they wanted to get a footing in the parish ; to have meetings, and to make speeches, and to affect to be very busy ; and meanwhile to undermine and lower the established clergy, and to strengthen and raise the dissenters, so that the two might be brought to a par with each other ; or that the ignorant, uneducated people, seeing the dissenting ministers countenanced by their legal ministers, and both acting together in a religious matter, might be led to put no difference between them.

The party being all silent upon my assertion with respect to the Cullens, I went on,—“ Then again, here are persons upon your list who are unable to read the Bible, and many more who are too profligate to read it. By giving it to the latter, you will bring it into contempt, and most probably see it in the pawnbroker’s shop, if it meet with no worse fate ; the former you ought first to instruct, if you mean to do them a real service. But for their instruction, which is everything, you make no provision whatever. My mode of distributing Bibles is entirely different. These gentlemen, Mr. King and Mr. Harris, are aware that we have four hundred children at school, and all of them, who stay long enough to be able to

read with tolerable ease, will carry away a Bible with them into their families ; and these Bibles I can procure from the old Christian Knowledge Society, at a much cheaper rate than from yours, the new one. Besides, I can get there, not only Bibles, but Prayer-books too, and every other sort of necessary tract to help the poor to understand what they read. What should I or my parish gain, therefore, by setting up a Bible Society ? Through the charity-schools, in a certain number of years, we may hope to supply the whole parish with Bibles, and with readers of them ; and I should like to know, whether any poor person wanting a Bible now, and having applied to *me* for one has ever been refused at all ; or if so, upon unsatisfactory grounds ? I do not, indeed, go hawking them about for sale, or compelling people to take them as a gift. The Bible, in my opinion, should never be given but with a little discrimination. If, in the course of my ministerial labours amongst the sick, or at church, or in any other way, I meet with a person without a Bible, able and disposed to read it, and also likely to profit by it, I trust that I am not backward in doing my duty. Look, gentlemen, at that goodly row of Bibles upon the shelves there : there must be many seekers before it is exhausted.”

Having said a great deal I now stopped, that they might answer me, if they wished it, or could

do it. After a short pause, Mr. Barker replied, “ It is impossible to deny, Sir, but that *your* method of distributing Bibles is a very good one, as far as it goes; but it will be a slow one, or very expensive to you. Set *us* to work, and we will do it for you in a trice, and also save your pocket.” “ I do not see exactly,” I said, “ how you will save my pocket; because all the rich people, whose money you might have expected to get, have refused to join with you; and as to the slowness of the execution of my plan, that is by no means against it, as sound discretion in giving, and a careful selection of persons, are of the very essence of it. It would be no gratification to *me* to say, that I had given away lavishly, and without due consideration, a hundred Bibles in a single month; but it would be a great gratification to me to be able to say, that I had given away *one* only to a useful purpose. I look to the useful purpose, and not to ostentation; and therefore, perhaps in a whole month I may not give away more than one. Upon the whole, therefore, Mr. Barker, such a local necessity or expediency is not made out, which can justify *your* intrusion amongst us, against the sense of those who are in authority here, and who are not disposed to neglect their duties or to surrender them to others.”

Mr. Barker now collected all his energies, and replied, “ Be there or be there not, Sir, any

necessity for a Bible Association here, which I will not dispute any further with you, I am confident of this, that every parish in the realm ought, as a matter of bounden duty, to furnish their contingent, whether great or small, but great if their means admit of it, to the magnificent spiritual work which is contemplated by the parent institution. And as for myself, Sir, though a non-resident, I feel myself so imperiously called to contribute what little ability I may have to the furtherance of this work in your parish, that all consideration of human opinions to the contrary must be totally set aside; a call, Sir, which applies to every other parish as well as to this, provided it be within the scope of my bodily powers." "Oh! Sir," I said, "if you have a *call*, there is no contending with you; and I shall cease to wonder at anything which you may do. But I must confess that, in my own case, if I were prompted by a supposed *call* to do a thing which the world might consider to be a violation of decorum, I should begin to suspect the *reality* of the call; or, in other words, to doubt the validity of the principles upon which I was about to act. You will find this, Sir, if you try it, to be a great and most excellent maxim for the regulation of human conduct. History will tell you, Sir, what has happened in the world in consequence of the neglect of this maxim. Hurried onward by an

imperious *call*, which disregarded persons, seasons, and things, men have rushed into the most enormous crimes. I am sorry, Sir, to have heard you use that expression. If you are under the influence of a *call*, you are beyond the reach of any reasons and arguments which I at least can produce. This smacks indeed, I *must* say, of the conventicle ; and I can now readily account for your zeal in the pursuit of measures which are hostile to the Church."

" Stop, Sir, I entreat you," he exclaimed interrupting me ; " my measures are not hostile to the Church, but intended to be its firmest bulwark. I have the happiness and the privilege of belonging to it, and I cherish an earnest desire to promote that prosperity to which the divine favour has raised it. It has many enemies, both within and without, who are endeavouring to calumniate and weaken it; but I fervently pray that it may continue to flourish, and that its credit and influence may be augmented more and more. So there is no foundation, Sir, for your accusation against me."

" Why, Mr. Barker," I said, " this is a most extraordinary mode which you have adopted of upholding the church. The bishop, who is the highest spiritual authority ; I myself, who have the actual spiritual charge and cure of souls here ; and the resident gentry, who are most attached to

the church ; may be supposed, I should presume without arrogance, to know, at least as well as others, what is most for her interest ; and we are all unanimous in discountenancing your interference and your measures. We wish to be left to ourselves, and to enjoy the harmony which now reigns amongst us. But you, for our good, forsooth, would hurl the firebrand of discord at us, and separate the lower classes from the upper, and from those who are set over them in the Lord ; or, like the French Revolutionists, you would cram your nostrums down our throats by force and violence, and not suffer us to stand aloof from the contentions which busy meddlers, all, no doubt, pretending a *call*, have introduced into other parishes, and have thereby destroyed their peace for ages. A pretty method truly of supporting the church by acting against the declared will of her ruling authorities, and setting her members together by the ears ! And pray, Sir, if you will permit me to ask, whom have you chosen for your coadjutors in this noble task of organising, or rather, in my view, of disorganising us ? You say you are a zealous friend of the church ; but I judge of a tree only by its fruits. Are not your coadjutors, chiefly, in all places, and here entirely, dissenters and seceders from the church ? And would *they*, do you think, move Heaven and earth to promote her prosperity ? No, Sir ; it is incre-

dible, inconceivable. They are taking advantage of your misplaced and mistaken zeal to assault and overthrow the establishment. You, Mr. Barker, and such as *you*, carried away by specious plans of doing good upon a vast and mighty scale, have made yourselves (if you will excuse a vulgar expression, but a very significant one) a mere cat's-paw in their hands."

It did not occur to me in what way I could so forcibly bring home Mr. Barker's conduct to his own mind and conscience as by hazarding these last observations, which it was natural to suppose would be rather galling to Messrs. King and Harris. Upon glancing my eye towards them as I spoke, I saw that they were sitting upon thorns ; so I said, "I intend no offence whatever to *you* personally, gentlemen ; and I am grieved that I cannot put the argument on its right foundation without seeming to make a personal allusion to you. It is possible, certainly, that you may not see how the present question tends to the result which I have mentioned ; or that you yourselves may have no intention of prejudicing the church by your present conduct. But, speaking generally, a conscientious dissenter must wish the downfall of the church ; and the more conscientious he is, the more he must wish it. At least, it is preposterous to suppose that he can desire *that* to flourish which he thinks to be wrong, and from which he

has separated *because* he thinks so. However, I must beg to say from history, that it is bad policy in the dissenters to pursue with so much bitterness the downfall of the church. It is under *her* shadow that they now repose in perfect security. The present church will always be a tolerating church ; destroy her, and you know not what may spring up to occupy her place. The Presbyterians, in the times of the great Rebellion, railed furiously against the bigotry and intolerance of the church ; but when they had usurped the ecclesiastical power into their own hands, they would tolerate none but themselves. This is a lesson for *you*, gentlemen."

My visitors were all thrown into an awkward situation by this speech of mine. Mr. Barker did not seem to know what to say, either to *me* or to his companions ; and Messrs. King and Harris were equally confounded, and remained for some time speechless. I was resolved, on my part, not to break the silence ; nor by any means to relieve them from the embarrassment which they had brought upon themselves, and which I thought might turn to their advantage by being prolonged. At length Mr. Harris recovered his presence of mind so far as to assert that neither he himself nor any of those with whom he acted had any designs inimical to the church ; that, on the contrary, they would be glad to see her prosperous

and powerful, and taking the lead in every great and good enterprise; and that they themselves would be well content to play a subordinate part. Before I could answer this, the great champion himself was reinstated in his confidence, and took up Mr. Harris's last words, and said, "I am sure of it, Mr. Harris, I am sure of it. We have all but one object; to unite in this glorious cause, forgetful of every private difference, and to give the right hand of fellowship to each other, Tory and Whig, churchman and dissenter, making one grand combined effort for the salvation of mankind from pole to pole. This is the beauty, this is the perfection of the plan,—that it places men of the most opposite principles by the side of each other, and inspires them with the true Christian spirit of union and harmony, amity and love."

Upon this effusion of Mr. Barker's they all raised their sunken crests, and applauded the sentiment, and re-echoed it again and again: I coolly inquired, if it were, indeed, their practice, in pursuance of this object, to join heart and hand with men of every denomination? "Yes," said Mr. King; "it has been well and truly stated by Mr. Barker, that it is one great excellence of the Bible Society to bring men of all denominations together, and to soften down their asperities with respect to each other." "So then," I rejoined, "you would be glad to see even Atheists and Infidels amongst

you; for this liberal latitudinarian principle excludes none, I presume." "Let them come, Sir," said Mr. Barker; "and we will make Christians of them in the end." "How, Mr. Barker?" I inquired; "Do the forms of doing business in your committees admit of a statement of the proofs of the being of a God, or of the evidences of revealed religion, for the benefit of your unconverted colleagues? If they did, I should think that Atheists and Infidels would keep aloof from you. But it is notorious, that many of that description are active supporters of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Do they come, think you, with the hope of being converted, or with what view?"

Here they all hesitated to answer; but at length they agreed, that, whatever the views of those people might be, their assistance was not to be refused, and their money might be turned to a good account. "But, as to the *fact*," I inquired again, "do you find that now and then an Atheist, or an Infidel is actually and imperceptibly, as it were, Christianised, by sitting at the same board with you, or by the routine intercourse of your society?" Mr. Harris confessed, that as yet he knew of no instance of the kind. "Then," I said, "*your* assertion, Mr. Barker, that you would make Christians of them in the end, is likely to be but of remote accomplishment; or rather it was the mere ebullition of your own sanguine temper; or

perhaps a third conjecture might be formed,—namely, that it is your excuse for uniting with Atheists and Infidels in an affair of religion, which cannot but lose somewhat of its sanctity, when such unholy people meddle in it. But let us now put the question in another view. I ask you, whether a Christian ought to abhor Atheism and Infidelity?" He could not deny it. "I ask you again, whether he ought to feel complacently towards the professors of such tenets, whom all the wise and the good, since the Christian era, have declared to be unfit for human society itself? Of Atheism, indeed, every age has pronounced its reprobation, both ancient and modern." He was staggered, and remained silent. "I infer," I said, "from your silence, that he ought not; indeed such a feeling would be an evident sign of a lamentable laxity of religious principles in himself. I ask then, thirdly, whether it be a desirable effect, which you state to be the result of Bible Society meetings, that they bring persons of all denominations together, and soften down the asperities of each towards the other? Is it desirable, that our horror of Atheism and Infidelity should be diminished; which can scarcely fail of being the case, if we give the right hand of fellowship to those who profess them? Remember that action and reaction are reciprocal and equal; and that it would be idle to argue, that you expect Atheists

and Infidels to change their opinions with respect to *you*, by associating with you, whilst your own opinions and feelings undergo no change by *your* associating with *them*."

Once more my adversaries were quite crest-fallen, and fearful to answer my interrogatories, either affirmatively or negatively; so I continued to assail them with fresh attacks. "And what say you, gentlemen, to the Socinians? I am sure that you all at present hold their opinions in abomination; and are not yet prepared to run the length of denying the Lord who bought you with his blood." "No, indeed!" they all exclaimed; "no, no! we are sincere believers in the divinity of our Saviour, and are confident that we shall always be so." "Beware then," I said, "how you associate with Socinians, or your confidence may deceive you. Your Society is full of them; and if you begin to sit on the same bench with them, without shuddering, you will soon cease, perhaps, to shudder at their impious doctrines. And why, I beseech you, should *you* expect by associating with them to make *them* believe Christ to be God, rather than *they you*, that he is a mere man? No rational account can be given of the probability of such a conquest on your parts, under all the circumstances of your intercourse with them; but a very rational account, indeed, may be given of the probability, that your own principles will gradually

lose their present strength and firmness, and approximate, it is to be feared, towards theirs. And let me remind you, besides, that the Scriptures absolutely forbid us to associate for any purpose, no, not even to eat, with persons so wilfully and so dangerously perverting the true faith of the Gospel."

They were all silent again, and unable or unwilling to controvert this point with me ; and I began to entertain a hope, that I had made some impression upon them. " Now, gentlemen," I proceeded, " it is sufficiently manifest, I think, that the principle, upon which you pride yourselves, is by no means to be admired ; and, for my own part, I tell you plainly, that I could never bring myself to embrace it. I would not on any account run the risk of having my detestation of such heterodox opinions insensibly lessened by acting day after day with persons who hold them ; nor would I give the world any handle for the suspicion that those opinions are a matter of indifference to me. What ! when I am bound by my ordination vow to expel all such heresies to the very utmost of my power, would it be a light thing to associate with the heretics themselves, and to hold them up to the people as my companions and friends ? In any case this would be an improper and extravagant proceeding ; but in a religious case it would be the height of extravagancy, and inconsistency, and folly, when at the same moment too I must

be perfectly aware that *their* views in promoting the circulation of the Bible must be totally different from my own. The certainty, indeed, that *their* object must necessarily be hostile to Christianity, and that they foresee some way or other in which the scheme of the Bible Society is calculated to weaken or overthrow it, should naturally indispose every cool reflecting person, who is a friend to Christianity, from joining with that Society. I ask you, Mr. Barker, to tell me honestly, do you think that Atheists or Infidels give their money and their time for the purpose of sending Bibles through the country to make men Christians?" "I cannot pretend to divine, Sir, what their object may be," said Mr. Barker; "but the fact is, that their subscriptions are employed in the purchase of Bibles, which Bibles we trust that God will bless to the spiritual good of those who may afterwards possess them." "So then it seems, Mr. Barker, that, for the sake of a paltry subscription and the power of purchasing more Bibles, you would associate with any man, be his private character and religious opinions whatever they might, and with the decided conviction upon your mind, at the same time, that he *must* have some sinister object in view; to promote the glory of his Maker and Redeemer cannot be his object, because if Satan be divided against himself, how then shall his kingdom stand? Well,

Sir, you and your friends may act in this manner ; but it is impossible for *me* to do so. I shall adhere to the good old Christian Knowledge Society, which is constituted upon far different principles ; which has stood the test of ages ; which has done incalculable good without ostentation, or any admixture of harm ; and which has the capacity of extending the sphere of its usefulness in proportion to the means with which its supporters may furnish it. I have been a member of it these twenty years ; and from its own stores alone it furnishes me, at little more than half the usual cost, with every book, not Bibles only, which may be necessary for my schools or parish, without compelling me to go here and there for the supply of my wants. Here is a vast superiority over your society ; and as to foreign transactions, upon which you pride yourselves so much, I think the proceedings of *mine* and of its twin sister, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, much more rational, and much more likely, under Providence, to be attended with success. Indeed, in my poor opinion, it is rank fanaticism to suppose, that every man who possesses a Bible in his own language must needs understand it, and become a Christian. No, no ! The Bible, taking it altogether, is, beyond all comparison, the most difficult of books. There is not a single chapter in it that does not require

many notes and *many comments*, to make it intelligible even to a superior mind; what then will become of the simple, uneducated babes, who should have milk, and not strong meat? It is true, that the great saving truths of the Bible may be brought into a narrower compass, and made plain to a mean capacity. But to perform this work we stand in need of catechists and preachers, who are able to speak with tongues; and these most essential parts of a system for the conversion of mankind our Societies provide, and yours altogether neglects, as if the Bible were the easiest of books, and all-sufficient in itself. Here then, gentlemen, if you please, we will finish our conversation. You now know my sentiments upon every branch of the question; why I cannot join with you, and why I deprecate the establishment of a Bible Association in this place. I hope you will reflect dispassionately upon what I have said, and for the sake of peace relinquish your undertaking."

Each of them would have said something in reply; but I rose suddenly from my chair, which obliged *them* to do the same, and without a moment's delay I rang the bell, and bowed them out of my room.

For some days afterwards I heard no more about them; but at length came a letter from Mr. Barker, announcing, in the style of his con-

versation reported above, that the call which he felt within him, to set up a Bible Society in my parish, was superior to all human motives or considerations, and that a meeting would accordingly take place, as soon as the necessary previous arrangements could be made. For some time there was a difficulty in finding a proper theatre for such an exhibition; but at length, a person lately come into the parish, and quite unknown amongst us, offered them the use of a large barn, and a carpenter was applied to with the view of adapting it to the purpose. The carpenter, however, came first to *me*, and inquired whether the meeting had *my* concurrence. "Certainly not," I said, "but still, I would by no means advise you to decline the undertaking, provided only that they give you the requisite security for the payment of your bill." This turned out to be a wise precaution; for, whether the people were convinced, that no Bible Association was wanted here, or whether the eloquence of the speakers was not vigorous and lively enough to rouse the audience, the whole receipt fell somewhat short of the expense incurred. The deficit, as I understood by report, was made good by the parent society; and also this bounty was accompanied by a present of a few Bibles which were deposited at Mr. Harris's, and put under his care. Once or twice I called upon that gentleman, to see these Bibles, and to inquire how he was going on,

when he candidly confessed, that he was doing little, or nothing; and at the same time he expressed his hopes (which raised my opinion of him) that I might not relax my own efforts, but proceed as usual with my own system. This, I told him, I should certainly do, as a matter of course; and so we separated.

§ III. MR. KING.

A considerable interval elapsed before I had a favourable opportunity of conversing with Mr. King, upon his own concerns. At length a pew becoming vacant in the church, which was in a better situation than *that* at present occupied by his sister and children, and capable also of containing the whole family, I obtained the churchwarden's permission to offer it to him, if he were inclined to use it in his own proper person. The business of the parish had for some time brought us very often together, and his opinions upon the matters before us being always in unison with mine, I flattered myself that all hostile feeling towards me, on his part, was now entirely extinguished, and consequently that there was a reasonable hope of my being able to bring him back into the bosom of the church.

With this view then and this hope,—after having

read several books, to make myself better able to discuss my subject,—I called upon Mr. King at his own house; and having found him at home, after the usual salutations, I entered immediately upon the occasion of my visit. “Mr. King,” I said, “there is a pew in the middle aisle of the church, which has just fallen to the disposal of the churchwarden, and which I am sure that your sister and the rest of your family will be glad to use; but I must tell you candidly, that it will not be considered a fair thing to assign the whole of it to them, unless you yourself, their head, may be disposed to join in communion with us. I am come, therefore, to talk the matter over with you, if you are at leisure and are inclined to do it.” “By all means, Sir,” he answered immediately, “and I am quite at leisure; I thank you too for your kindness in recollecting *me* and my family upon the present vacancy; and at all events, Sir, whether we have the whole pew or not, it will be a great advantage to my family to be removed into it.” “Very well,” I said; “so far shall be certainly done; but it would be a much better arrangement to occupy the whole pew yourselves, without the interference of others, you know not whom; and a similar opportunity of accommodation may not occur again for many years. What do you think of it? I say nothing of the pleasure which it would give to your family. You must be

well aware, how delighted they would be, to see *you* amongst them in the great act of worshipping the Almighty; and to put an end to that unpleasant feeling, which they must needs be conscious of, when they reflect, that all their neighbours are perpetually speculating upon your probable divisions at home, the sister disagreeing with her brother, and the children with their father. But I wish chiefly to remind you, that love, and peace, and unity, are the very law and character of our Christian profession; that to be joined all together in one communion, and to magnify God with one mind and one mouth, is the glorious consummation devoutly to be prayed for; that we ought all of us to do what we can in our respective stations to effect it; and that it is no trivial sin, to promote separations, to occasion schisms and breaches, and thus to rend asunder the church of Christ, which is his body. In many respects we might be the happiest nation in the world, if it were not for our religious quarrels; in this respect we are certainly the most unhappy. Well as we know that God positively commands us to follow after the things which make for the peace of the church, yet no commandment is so generally and so scandalously violated. Do you allow the truth of what I have been saying?"

"I cannot entirely deny it," he replied unwillingly; "and I have by no means bound myself so

irrevocably to the chapel as to have given up every thought of returning to the church ; but I have doubts, Sir, upon the matter ; and whilst these doubts continue, I cannot conscientiously do more than come occasionally. You know, Sir, that St. Paul, speaking of meats, says, that ' he who doubteth, is damned, if he eat ; ' and that ' whatever is not of faith is sin ; ' and, in another place, that ' every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind.' This is very terrible, Sir, and must not be neglected." " Perhaps," I said, " you misunderstand these passages, Mr. King ; for there is really nothing very terrible about them, when taken in their right meaning ; and at any rate, they are not applicable to your present condition." " How is that, Sir," he asked ? " Why first," I replied, " you probably understand the word ' damned,' as relating to eternal destruction in hell ; but it signifies no such thing, either in this place, or in some others which might be mentioned. According to the present state of our language, the word ' condemned' would have suited this place much better, and the sense of the passage might be represented in this manner :— He who doubts about the lawfulness of eating some particular meat, and yet eats of it, is condemned. You see that it has nothing to do with condemnation in the next world, but only means, that a man is conscience-struck at once in this

world, if he eat what he doubts to be lawful. But the truth is, that there is nothing in the passage about doubting at all; for the translation is not correct, and it should have been, he who makes a difference between one sort of meat and another, thinking it lawful to eat one and not another, and yet after all, eats of *that* which he allows in his own mind to be unlawful to touch, that man is self-condemned. This, you perceive, is a very true proposition; but it does not concern *you*, for *you* doubt; but the man of whom St. Paul speaks had no doubt whatever. Now a man who doubts about a thing, may still do it without sin; but a man who does a thing, against which his conscience reclaims, is manifestly guilty. Doubts may be outweighed by doubts on the other side; but when a man has a clear decided conviction on one side, and not even a doubt on the other, if he acts against his conviction, his conduct is sinful. I hope, therefore, it is now plain to you, Mr. King, that *you* are not affected by this passage."

Mr. King appeared as if he did not thoroughly comprehend me; and he was by no means pleased to have his text explained away, because his abstaining himself from church would be the less capable of a justification. So I continued without waiting for his opinion, "The assertion of St. Paul regards eating. Suppose it, if you will, to mean what it seems to do in our translation; yet

you can have no reason to apply it to other actions in general, and still less to your own case. A man who eats a thing, about which he doubts, whether it be lawful or not, might have abstained from eating it altogether, without the least shadow of sin. He is perfectly certain that there is no harm whatever in not eating, and that the only possible harm is in eating. But this is not like your case. For it is manifest, that there is great harm in *your* abstaining from coming to church. You are bound to obey the laws of your country ; and to listen to those who are legally in authority over you ; and to continue steadfastly in their doctrine and fellowship. To disregard all this is a very serious consideration indeed ; and I think you will find great difficulty in the attempt to divest your mind of all apprehension of the sinfulness of such conduct. And what have you to put in the other scale ? A mere doubt as to the lawfulness of joining with us ; or, perhaps, only a vague idea that you may be more edified elsewhere than at church."

He was quite unable to parry this attack for the present at least ; so he referred me to the other text about faith, and desired to hear my opinion upon it. " My good Sir," I said, " you surely do not suppose that the word ' faith,' as it is here used, means anything about our belief in Jesus Christ or the Gospel. It means no such thing,

but only the conviction of a man's mind with respect to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating certain meats ; and if a man eat what he believes to be unlawful, and in spite of that conviction, undoubtedly he sins. This proposition, indeed, may be applied generally ; everything done against conviction the other way is sin. So this text will not help you, Mr. King ; for you are not convinced of the unlawfulness of joining with us ; you only doubt about it ; and on the other hand there must be the still stronger doubt of the lawfulness of separating from us."

Mr. King was now almost thrown upon his back, as on former occasions, and had recourse to his last text : " What then am I to do ? " he inquired ; " for Scripture says, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." " Ah ! my good Sir," I answered, " we shall make wild work with Scripture if we take it without *note* or *comment*. To accomplish the plain meaning of this passage would be in many cases unreasonable, and in many cases impossible ; and there are thousands of things which a man is under the necessity of doing, without being fully persuaded in his own mind about them, one way or the other. Hence arises a probability, that the passage might have been better translated ; and I recollect very well that an excellent commentator assures us, that it should have been translated in

this manner: 'Let every man enjoy his own opinion.' This is a translation, it must be allowed, which suits admirably with the context; for the Apostle is speaking of persons, who have a respect for particular days, and of others again, who respect all days alike; and then he might naturally say, let every one rest satisfied with his own judgment, rather than disturb the peace of the church, by contending and quarrelling about matters of indifference. So that you perceive this text will not help you any better than the others; and it is my duty to tell you plainly that unless you have firmer grounds to stand upon, your separation from the church is schismatical and sinful."

"I hope not, Sir," was his reply; but as he did not seem disposed to bring forward any more texts or arguments in this stage of our conversation, to vindicate his conduct, I assailed him again in the following manner:—"Pray, tell me," I said, "do you think that the Gospel of Christ would suffer in any way, or that any injury would arise to the cause of Christianity itself, if you were in close communion with our church?" He hesitated, but he was forced to confess that he did not think it. "Well then," I continued, "do you think that any injury would arise to the government of the country or to the country itself?" He allowed that there was no probability of it.

“ Again,” I said, “ are you apprehensive of any harm to your family?” He could not state any. “ Very well then,” I said; “ now that we have considered one side of the question, let us turn to the other. Does not the Gospel suffer, does not Christianity suffer, whenever there are quarrels about it, and divisions, and separations, and heresies? Is not infidelity promoted by them, or lukewarmness, or indifference to all religion? Do not many people argue, that all who differ cannot be in the right, but that all may be in the wrong; and so make that a plea for not troubling themselves about any religion whatever? What is your opinion of this? Answer me candidly. Do you not by your own conduct, as much as lies in *you*, individually, produce these effects, occasioning scandal and offence to the weak, and endangering the salvation of some for whom Christ died?”

Mr. King was astounded at this charge, and asserted with earnestness, that the matter had never struck him in so serious a light; but, upon being pressed, he could not deny that the honour and success of Christianity must needs be promoted by the unanimity of Christians amongst themselves, and that a contrary result must be the consequence of a contrary practice. “ Certainly,” I said, “ it must be so in *all* cases, and *all* unprejudiced persons must see it; all, I believe, *do* see it strikingly in one case, when mis-

sionaries attempt the conversion of heathen nations. What must the people think, when they observe these missionaries hostile to each other; disagreeing about the very religion which they are sent to teach, and more zealous to inculcate their own opinions than the genuine unadulterated Gospel of Christ?" He granted that the effect could not but be mischievous.

" Well then," I continued, " do you not also perceive, that these religious dissensions and quarrels produce disaffection to the government as it is constituted in church and state, and thereby endanger the peace of the country itself? The wisdom of our ancestors enacted a test to guard the national church, which the dissenters had overthrown, as history tells us, and, it cannot be disputed, by fraud and violence; by this test, as being a badge of dishonour, and creating political disabilities, the dissenters of course are aggrieved more or less; they wish naturally to cast off the yoke, and are consequently inimical to the Government which imposes it, and ready to take advantage of every public calamity for the purpose of gaining some private advantage for their sects. The property of the clergy, too, must needs be a perpetual eye-sore to them, and no doubt they would gladly rob and plunder the church again, as they did in the time of Charles I. These are bitter expressions and bitter truths,

Mr. King, both for *you* to hear and for *me* to speak ; but my argument must not be weakened by glossing over the facts of history and the circumstances of the present day. They are undeni-able, and they speak loudly of themselves. God forbid, Mr. King, that I should charge all these things upon *you* personally ; you are, I sincerely believe, a loyal man ; and your constant inter-course with *me*, and your agreement with me in parochial matters, has prevented you perhaps from fostering the same hostility towards *me*, which is felt by the dissenters in general towards the ministers of the established church. But human nature will be human nature still ; and it is to be feared that you will gradually, and almost imperceptibly, imbibe the passions and prejudices of those with whom you have associated, and hate that from which you have separated, and the government which protects it. At all events, the peace, order, and harmony of the body politic are exposed to continual hazard by these dissensions ; and whoever encourages them by his own conduct is answerable for any consequences that may ensue."

Mr. King was extremely reluctant to concede this point, and I was obliged to go over it again and again, arguing from history, and from facts in which I had been personally concerned ; but when there appeared little probability of coming

to a satisfactory conclusion upon it, I turned to the remaining point, respecting his family, which would have required greater delicacy in the handling, if I had not been desired by his sister herself to enforce this very topic. “ You have allowed,” I said, “ already, that no possible harm could arise to your family from your being in close communion with the church ; but now, I ask you, would not great good arise from it ? ” He was silent ; so I continued. “ Would it not be a pleasing spectacle to all the beholders who saw you accompanying your sister and children down the main street to the parish-church, in the midst of hundreds of your fellow-parishioners, saluted, as you go along, by the solemn bells chiming from the venerable tower, and inviting you to worship the God of your fathers as your fathers worshipped him ? Would it not be gratifying to yourself to do this, instead of skulking by the back lanes, quite alone, to a more remote unconsecrated conventicle, and when you come there, hearing perhaps one of the lowest of the people, an uneducated carpenter or cobbler, who dares to intrude himself into the ministration of sacred things—at all events, one who has received no lawful commission to teach or preach the word of God, or to administer the holy sacraments ? Then what must be the thoughts of your sister and children whilst they fear, no doubt, that you are guilty of

schism, and liable to the punishment denounced against it in Scripture? Must not such a surmise perpetually harass their minds? Must not they also receive with distrust every word that you utter on the subject of religion? so that you must either be entirely silent on *that* which is most important to the head of a family, or engage in unpleasant altercations with those whom it is your duty to instruct, and to strengthen in their principles. In short, what perfect union can there be amongst you, of which religion is not the bond? Will not your very prayers be hindered, if it be possible for you to pray together at all?"

Mr. King appeared to be not altogether unmoved by this description; and it was impossible for him to deny that some of these evils had really occurred in his own case. Yet he did not yield, but endeavoured to shift off all reflection upon them by asking me how he could act otherwise than he did with a safe conscience, and whether I could advise him to cast away conscience at once? "By no means," I answered; "I would not advise you to cast away conscience, but to *inform it better*. Tell me, are all your doubts on one side only? Do you doubt about the church, and not doubt about the conventicle?" At first he was struck on a heap, as it were, by this question; but, after a pause, he said that it was better to go to the meeting-house, than to

have no public exercise of religion at all. " That may, or may not be," I rejoined, " according to a variety of circumstances, which must be taken into the account before we can pronounce accurately; but it seems to *me* quite unaccountable, that doubting, as you do, about the church, which is established by the law of the land, and governed by an apostolical discipline, and directed by a ministry deriving from the Apostles, you should go at once, and without doubting, to a meeting-house, which has none of these advantages—which is moreover in an open state of separation from the church, and, for aught you know, schismatical. Do you really think, Sir, that if a person doubt about the church, he may immediately go where he lists, with a safe conscience? Surely it is impossible for any man to think so, who thinks soberly even for a few moments."

Upon saying this, I waited for an answer; but I heard nothing intelligible—little, in short, but humming and hawing, without any decisive opinion; so I asked him to have the kindness to tell me, if he wished the matter to be cleared up, why he had united himself with those with whom he was now in communion? After having looked about for some time, evidently to find justificatory reasons, he replied, that at first he had gone to them, as being the nearest and most respectable congregation of Christians; and that he continued

with them now, because he was more edified than elsewhere. "Very well," I said; "and now let me ask you this question, do you think, upon due reflection, that the mere circumstances of the nearness of a congregation, and the respectableness of its members, and even the supposition of a superior edification, are sufficient to destroy all doubts in your mind, as to the lawfulness of separating from the church of your country and your ancestors, for the sake of such a union?" "I think," he answered, "that edification at least is a very good test of my being in the right way. I wish to be improved; and I feel that I *am* improved. God, no doubt, approved of my wish, and therefore he blesses it. Is not this sound reasoning, Sir?" "We shall see, presently," I said. "Do you call the Socinians heretics?" "Certainly I do," was his reply. "Well," I continued, "but those Socinian heretics not only fancy and assert that they are more edified in their own peculiar way, but they absolutely abominate some of the doctrines of our church, which you consider essential to Christianity. Will you allow then at once, that their feeling, and their notion of being more edified, will justify their heresies and their schism?" "No," he answered, "I cannot allow it." "You are in the right," I said; "for heresy is heresy still, whether men embrace it conscientiously or not. Their own feelings about it

cannot alter the nature of the thing itself. God indeed will know whether they are mistaken unavoidably, or wilfully, or through negligence ; and he will judge them accordingly ; but without doubt they are responsible to *him*, even for what they do at the impulse of conscience. Now, then, take your own case. You agree with the church, as you say, in her doctrines ; and all that I ever heard you complain of is, that certain favourite doctrines of yours, which you suppose to be doctrines of the church, are not preached so often as you could wish ; and that other doctrines are too much insisted upon, which you cannot, however, deny to be the doctrines of Scripture, and essential to the practice of every true Christian. Under these circumstances, you separate from us ; you run about the neighbouring parishes, to try every strange, uneducated, unauthorised preacher. At last, when your ears, itching after those favourite doctrines, have been saluted with the delightful sounds—be the orator who he may, sent or not sent, commissioned or not commissioned—there you fix, for a time at least, and as long as you fancy yourself edified. Now, I ask, whether this be not downright schism ; and whether you can, with perfect ease, justify to your own conscience, merely on the plea of edification, a conduct which draws so many evils after it, to the church, to the community, to your own family ? Undoubtedly,

your case is worse than that of a conscientious Socinian."

"God forbid, Sir," exclaimed Mr. King, with energy, but without producing a single reason to overturn my conclusion. "Well, then," I continued, "if you disclaim this comparison with so much abhorrence, I hope you will consider what I have advanced with more attention than you seem hitherto to have done. And to assist you in the consideration, I beg to ask you, whether, upon your principle, you have not been accustomed to think yourself fully at liberty to leave the congregation with which you are at present united, and to join any other which appears to *you* to be most edifying?" He confessed that he had so thought. "Next then," I said, "consider, whether the Apostles ever contemplated such a state of things, except to reprobate it. Do they not condemn all wavering and double-mindedness? Do they not praise all steadfastness and perseverance in their fellowship and doctrine? Do they not exhort, do they not pray, that all men may be well-grounded, and settled in the one unchangeable faith once delivered, and not to say, I am of Paul—I am of Apollos—I am of Cephas? Do they not command us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? To obey those who are over us in the Lord? To be subject to the higher powers? To submit to every ordinance of man

for the Lord's sake ? To be subject, in short, not only for wrath's sake, but even for the sake of conscience ? Are these things in Scripture, Mr. King, or are they not ?" He granted that they were. "Have they," I inquired, "a different meaning from what the plain sense of the words imports ?" He did not know that they had. "And does not everything which the Apostles say deserve and demand our attention ?" I inquired again. He could not deny it. "Will it be the same to us then," I inquired once more, "whether we obey them or not; just as if we were not concerned in their injunctions; or as if they themselves wrote at random, or for our amusement, or for their own ? Is it not quite ridiculous, or rather impious, to suppose so ?"

At this point we were disturbed by a ringing at the gate; and it being necessary for Mr. King himself to go out of the room, where we had been sitting, I broke up the conference for that time, and departed; leaving him to digest at leisure the weighty matters which I had brought home to his notice.

§ IV. MR. KING.

In a few days, not having met him anywhere, and having received no message from him about the pew, I called at his house again. He was at home, and upon seeing him I exclaimed immediately, "Well, Sir, what is to be done with the pew? I hoped to have heard from you on the very day of our last conversation, that you would embrace my offer." "Why, Sir," he replied, "to tell you the truth, I fear that I cannot accept it. It would be a pity to deprive somebody else of a good sitting, and yet not use it constantly myself." "But what is to prevent you," I said, "from using it constantly, except perhaps ill health, or some other urgent cause which may keep any man from church?"

At first he hesitated; at length he answered, that although there was much weight in many things which I had mentioned, yet he could not admit all. "Your explanations of Scripture, Sir, for example; how am I to know that they are correct?" "Very true, Mr. King," I said; "you I believe are not acquainted with the original languages, in which the Scriptures were written; and probably, you only know those Scriptures through the medium of our English translation." "I do not Sir, indeed," he replied. "Then there is no help

for you," I rejoined, "but to take them upon the authority of others. You must of necessity depend upon others, both for the general fidelity of the whole translation, and for the interpretation of each particular passage. You cannot stir a single step without *notes* and *comments*. Neither can you possibly understand any notes and comments, which respect the critical explanation of the ancient languages. Consider then how much you are compelled to receive upon authority alone; the reasons on one side and on the other side being entirely out of your reach." "What is to become of me then," he exclaimed; "for I suppose I am not at liberty to let the thing alone?" "No, indeed," I said, "you certainly are not, at any rate. If you had continued in the established church, you would still have been bound, according to your means and opportunities, to search out the true sense of Scripture, when doubts and difficulties might have arisen about it; and you would have had your lawfully-appointed minister to go to for a solution of those doubts and difficulties. But having separated yourself from those who are the legal interpreters of Scripture, you are doubly bound to be careful what you are about, and to whose authority you trust. You set up now for yourself, as it were, and therefore you must take the whole responsibility upon your own shoulders. The persons who officiate at your chapel, you know, cannot

help you. They have not had a learned education, and therefore want instructors themselves. If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?" "It may be, Sir," he answered; "but may not the interpretation of the established ministers also be wrong?" "Certainly they may," I said; "but you will have done your duty in accepting them, and will be quite free from all guilt. An order of men has been set apart from the beginning, for the very purpose of expounding Scripture, and ministering to the people in all sacred things. Whilst you acquiesce in their doctrines, being yourself unlearned, and quite incapable of estimating the reasons upon which they ground their expositions, you run no hazard of criminality in God's sight, whether their expositions be right or wrong; for you submit to that authority which the laws of your country have placed over you, and which claims to be derived from God; but, from the moment you desert *them*, you stand upon a perilous foundation; you are concerned to be certain, that you have separated from them upon the truest and best principles; and, indeed, that you are guided, which can hardly be, by a safer authority. See then, Mr. King, for how much you voluntarily make yourself answerable."

"Excuse me, Sir," he replied, "if I venture to differ from you with respect to part of what

you have laid down. If all men had acted on *your* principle, we should have had no Reformation, as far as I can see. We should still have been in Popish darkness." "I think not," I said, "for there were many causes at work, which produced the Reformation. But if we had, it might be presumed that God would have looked graciously upon the great mass of the people, although in error; because it was not in *their* power to do better than they did; if learned men did not enlighten them, their ignorance would have been invincible, and therefore pardonable. However, a change took place, and the authors of it were the persons responsible to God and their country; and if they had been in the wrong, the responsibility would have been tremendously heavy. But they were in the right; they were men not only of the most exemplary piety, but also of the most shining talents and the most solid learning; able to trace everything to the fountain-head; mighty in the original Scriptures, and in the histories of the primitive writers of the church; so that they ascertained by their investigations what the opinions and practices of that church had been, and how and when every corruption had crept in during the lapse of time. It is no wonder that men of this description should create an authority about themselves superior to what was then the highest and when they afterwards died

for their opinions, it was naturally to be expected that an astonishing effect would be produced upon the minds of others ; and that multitudes would follow so eminent an example in studying the Scriptures, and consequently in shaking off the superstitions and other abominations of Popery. But your case is widely different. You are obliged, by your peculiar circumstances, to take all the main foundations upon trust, which those learned men were not. Whilst, therefore, you submit to those who are in the chair by legal and divine authority, you are conscientiously safe, as I said before ; when you oppose yourself to them, you are in danger, not only of being in the wrong, but also of condemnation."

Mr. King made no attempt to answer what I had advanced, but inquired how I could prove that authority to belong to the ministers of the Establishment, which I had so often assumed in the course of the argument. "Very easily," I replied, "and very satisfactorily too, to any unprejudiced mind. As to their legal authority, of *that* there can be no doubt. The law appoints them to their office, and protects them in it ; and marks the sphere of their exertions ; and, in short, defines all their duties, as well as their maintenance. But you doubt, perhaps, about what I have called their divine authority ; by which I mean no more than that they have their commission to do what

they do from God, or from Jesus Christ, or his Apostles, which is the same thing. This is a question entirely of history, whether Scriptural or other history. That ministers were first appointed by Christ, and afterwards by the Apostles, Scripture tells us. The primitive Fathers tell us the rest; namely, that, in point of fact, according to the Scripture doctrine, no man took this honour to himself; but that it was transmitted from one to another in regular succession from the Apostles, by the laying on of hands. This mode of ordination, by the laying on of hands, was at least apostolical, and most probably of Christ's own appointment, when he sent the twelve and the seventy to preach; and, upon either supposition, I affirm, that whoever has been thus ordained by a representative of the Apostles, has a commission from God; for doubtless the Apostles, if it were done by *them* first, did not establish so important a matter without divine authority."

" Yes, Sir," said Mr. King; " but this is not exclusive. There may be other ways of having such a commission from God, besides that of regular transmission from the Apostles, and ordination by any particular person. Scripture says, indeed, that no man taketh this honour to himself; but it adds, except he be called of God. And surely, Sir, God both can and *has* called persons to labour in his vineyard without adhering or tying

himself down to petty forms." "Ah! Mr. King," I exclaimed; "call them not petty forms, when they are apostolical institutions, and, by just inference, divine: nay, when it was in some such manner that Christ himself ordained his immediate disciples at least to their ministry; and, therefore, those petty forms may be supposed to be of God's own selection and institution; but if so, why should he depart from them and act by any other method? Nay, we know positively from the Scriptures, that, even in extraordinary cases, in which he interposed himself, the persons concerned were sent to the appointed ministers of the Gospel, in order that the transaction might be completed by the established forms." "How is that, Sir?" said Mr. King; "nothing of the kind occurs to my recollection." "Listen," I replied. "Was not St. Paul supernaturally called to be a minister of Christ?" "Certainly," he answered. "And did this call dispense with forms?" I inquired. "I do not know to what you allude," he said. "Who baptized him?" I asked. "Ananias," he answered. "So then," I said, "an undoubted call from Heaven did not dispense with baptism. And afterwards, when he and Barnabas went out to preach to the Gentiles, were they not ordained for the purpose by the laying on of hands and prayer?" He allowed that it was so. "Well then," I asked again, "who baptized the

Eunuch?" "Philip the Deacon," he answered. "True," I said; "but who sent Philip to him?" "Why, Sir," he replied, "if I remember rightly, an angel and the Holy Ghost himself had both of them some share in it." "They had indeed," I said; "and could not the angel, I pray you, and the Holy Spirit, have sufficiently enlightened this poor heathen, and also baptized him, if baptism were necessary, without bringing in Philip miraculously for these purposes?" "Undoubtedly they might," he answered. "Then why did they not," I asked, "except that certain forms and certain persons were appointed for sacred ministrations, and God would not have them performed in any other way, or by any other persons?" He allowed that it could not otherwise be so easily accounted for. "If you want," I continued, "more instances of the same fact, think of the angel that was sent to Cornelius, and of the Spirit which spoke to Peter. God, you see, employed an angel and the Spirit in the matter of making Cornelius a Christian; but, to complete the form, he introduced one of the appointed ministers of Christ, one whom Christ himself had certainly ordained, and most probably by the laying on of his holy hands."

All this seemed to be quite new to Mr. King; and it wrapped him in a profound silence. He

said nothing, for he did not know what to say ; so I pushed the argument home, by asking him, whether he did not now consider it a most serious and awful undertaking for any man to assume to himself this high prerogative of administering in sacred things, and of teaching and preaching, without a commission to do so from God ? "A man may say, that he is called of God, as was Aaron ; but, unless he perform miracles, how will he prove this, to the satisfaction even of his own mind ? It is clear that he never can satisfy others about it, if they understand the question, and are not besotted, like the followers of Johanna Southcott, and the rest of the impostors, who have appeared in all ages. But after all, now we see that a *real* call would not be enough ; and that every man wishing for the power to minister, must go to the rulers of the church for it. In what a situation, then, are too many congregations, receiving the ordinances appointed for salvation from presumptuous, unhallowed hands ! For what reason have we to suppose, that any efficacy will attend upon any ordinance, if administered by one who has no right to administer it ? If a man strive for anything, yet he must strive in the lawful manner, before he can justly win the crown. God, we hope, will mercifully interfere for the pardon of the ignorant and the deluded ;

but what will become of those who have the means of knowing better, and who plunge into such a situation with their eyes open?"

Mr. King was more and more confounded ; but having now bethought himself of an objection to my doctrine, he said, " If I comprehend you, Sir, you mean that, as in the case of Aaron, there was an original call, and then, without any particular call, his successors were all established and supposed to be commissioned from God, by the observation of appointed forms ; so in the case of Christianity, there was an original call, extending to Christ and his Apostles, and from that time all other ministers have received their commissions from God by being ordained according to the primitive appointment, either of Christ or his Apostles, which you consider to be the same thing." " You comprehend me exactly," was my answer. " Then, Sir," he rejoined, " are you not concerned to make out to our satisfaction, that no link is wanting in the chain reaching from Christ to yourself ? For if so, every link from that link downwards is good for nothing. If the order has been broken by an intruder, all who derive from *him* must be set aside ; and so, Sir, your own hands may be unhallowed for the sacred office which you bear in the church." " Very well, Mr. King," I said, " it is *your* business to inquire about the con-

tinuity of these links, for the quieting of any fears that may start up in your mind about it. We ourselves, the ministers of this church, are thoroughly satisfied, that the transmission has been unbroken by any faulty link. At all events no man can now disprove the correctness of it. But if it were indeed faulty, there remains no remedy but in the mercy of God; and as the fault is not ours, we have no reason to doubt of that mercy supplying the defect; you may therefore boldly assume that all is right. For your greater contentment, however, I will just mention, that at the times when a flaw might be expected with most probability, there was none. At the Reformation, more especially, all was correct. In fact, we derive from those Roman Catholic bishops, who changed to the Protestant principles; and who, though ordained and consecrated in a corrupt church, possessed by right and retained the powers of ordaining ministers, and of consecrating other bishops. Their names are recorded in history, and I could tell them, if it were necessary; but you will readily conceive that this might have been the case. If indeed all the bishops of those times had persisted in their Popish principles, the chain would have been broken, and the misfortune without a remedy. New bishops must have been created in some extraordinary way, and we might reasonably hope

that God would bless their ordinations. However, nothing of the kind occurred, and therefore we need not speculate upon it."

" Well, Sir," he said, " supposing this to be as you state it, explain to me another difficulty. If a pious Christian, not in holy orders, according to the method which *you* call Apostolical, were to be cast upon an island of Heathen people,—must he abstain from all attempts to convert and baptize them, if he feel himself *called* to do so?" " No, indeed," I replied; " he must do the best that he can under the circumstances in which Providence has placed him, and leave the rest to God himself; but if an opportunity should occur, it will be his duty to submit to the lawful authority, and to amend, as far as may be possible, the irregular proceeding. So this case, my good Mr. King, will not assist you in the least; *your* ministers were not compelled to become such by extraordinary, unavoidable accidents; nor are *you* compelled for lack of legal ministers to fly for instruction in righteousness to those who have crept into the fold, without any commission, or any valid authority."

Mr. King, beaten at all points, was now disposed to be a little angry, and he betook himself to this wretched quibble,—" Whatever you may say, Sir," he exclaimed somewhat petulantly, " I trust to that excellent text, which tells me, that every good gift comes from above, from God. Our

minister preaches to my *experience*, and I am edified in consequence; and therefore I am satisfied with his commission." "Oh! Mr. King," I replied, "what a perversion of Scripture is this! Here is a text which is used very strikingly for a particular purpose; and you tear it away from the context, and apply it to something totally different. St. James is asserting, with a just apostolical indignation, against those who made God the author of their sins, that it was impossible for such a Being to be himself tempted with evil, or to tempt any man; on the contrary, that he was the author of every good and perfect gift, and that such was his permanent and unchangeable nature. Now what has this to do with proving that a man has a commission from God, because he may have some talent, and may edify his hearers?" Upon this Mr. King beginning again to hum and haw, as on former occasions, without producing any defence of his text, and manifestly wishing me to be gone, I took my leave, and abandoning all hope of convincing him of his errors, I offered the sitting to another person, who gladly accepted it. It seemed to me very difficult to account for his obstinacy and pertinacity of adherence to his opinions, when everything advanced by him had been directly answered; it matters not whether properly, or improperly, as he himself was incapable of refuting me, and did not pretend that he knew of any

person, or book, which could do it; but I was soon afterwards informed of a fact, which solved the difficulty. The chapel, which he frequented, had been served sometimes by one person, and sometimes by another, of every possible description and character. At length the more respectable members were both wearied and ashamed of such a proceeding, and had united in giving a call, as they term it, to one of their preachers, whom they respected most, and had settled him as their permanent minister. Mr. King, therefore, whose name was signed to the instrument, was deterred from coming over to the church by the fear of reproach and ridicule, if he deserted them so soon after taking so decisive a step. Upon being acquainted with this circumstance, I forbore for some time to trouble him any further with religious discussions; but we met as usual, and were very cordial together upon parochial matters; and, indeed, his sister gave me hopes now and then, that he only wanted an excuse for quitting the chapel, and coming to the church. Several times, she told me, on a Sunday morning, he had taken up his hat to accompany his family to church; but he had laid it down again as often, lest he might be accused of wavering and unsteadiness.

However, at length, after a considerable period, although he had been made a deacon of the chapel, which was a great stroke of policy, he came to

church not unfrequently, and especially on Sacra-
ment days ; and he continued the same practice
up to the time of the next section.

§ V.—MR. KING AND MR. BARWELL.

During the period last described, some short conversations frequently took place between Mr. King and myself, but not of sufficient importance to be recorded here. One day, however, he brought with him to my house, very opportunely, a brother-dissenter of respectable character and property, of the name of Barwell, who had lately settled in the parish, and with whom I was desirous to converse, for reasons that will presently appear. He too had some business with *me* upon the arrangement of his tithes ; a subject always very irritating and vexatious to a dissenter.

After Mr. Barwell had been introduced to me, and we were all seated, we talked for a few minutes on the general topics of the day, which happened at that time to be highly interesting, on account of the probable happy results of a great victory just obtained ; but I came to my main point as soon as I could. “ Mr. Barwell,” I said, “ why will your servant persist in acting so illegally as to go about preaching in the open air,

and drawing around him, rather tumultuously, the very scum and refuse of our parish, who absolutely insult him too, whilst he is in the act of preaching to them?" "I do not approve of his conduct by any means, Sir," replied Mr. Barwell. "How *could* you?" I asked immediately. "Our church and constitution, out of a regard to scrupulous consciences, tolerate everything not blasphemous, or immediately detrimental to the state; but then there are certain forms, which the law has laid down for all dissenters, very easy to be observed, and attended with scarcely any expense; and, therefore, there is the less excuse for violating them. In short, situated as I am, I should not think that I was doing my duty to the country, if I did not require a strict adherence to those forms, salutary besides as I consider them to be. Now I have taken the liberty, Mr. Barwell, of sending to your servant to say this, by the constable of the parish, who is the proper officer for such a business; and here the matter rests at present, until I hear more about it."

Mr. Barwell made no objection to my proceeding, as thus related; but, on the contrary, he rather commended me. However, he said, with a little air of sarcasm, "You are quick in finding things out, Sir; very little escapes you." "I thank you," I replied, "for the compliment which you pay me about my discoveries. It is no wish

of mine to be a meddler, I assure you ; but it is an essential part of my office to watch and resist the introduction of novelties into my parish, especially if it be done illegally. The Gospel, Mr. Barwell, is eternally the same ; no new, no compendious ways to salvation are capable of being devised by men of the greatest learning, talents, or piety ; much less can I allow that *your servant* is capable of devising them. Pray, Sir, what is his real character ?" " Why, Sir," he replied, " to tell you the truth, he is a man of very high notions in religion." " Does he think himself inspired ?" I asked ; for he stopped without explaining what he meant. " No," he answered ; " I do not believe that he goes so far as *that* ; but he is a very eccentric man indeed." " And how is he as to intellect ?" I inquired. " Has he any talent or knowledge ?" " I must confess," he replied, " that he is a weak man ; but he has got hold of a great many texts of Scripture, which he bands about with fluency." " Yes," I said, " I have no doubt he makes wild work with them ; tearing them asunder from the context ; perverting them to the strangest senses ; and quite incapable of comparing Scripture with Scripture, so as to discover the true consistent meaning. Such a man is very likely to seize upon a passage of St. Paul about faith without works, and to raise a famous building upon it, to cover himself one day with its ruins. But he will

pay no attention perhaps to what St. James says, that faith without works is dead. This will not suit him ; this must give way to the other, which chimes much better with our corrupt nature. Is he an Antinomian ?" " No, Sir," he answered ; " I do not think he is ; but I cannot speak positively ; for in fact I know little about his doctrines. He does my business in the mean time with diligence." " But is it possible, Mr. Barwell," I said, " that you, as his master, do not consider yourself under an obligation to know something accurately about his opinions ?" " Why, you are aware, Sir," he replied, " that I am myself a dissenter from your Church, and therefore you may suppose that I have no particular wish for my servants to be churchmen." " Yes, indeed," I said ; " and not only *that*, but it seems that if they do but dissent from the Church, then you care not at all what their opinions may be." This I uttered with a laugh, to mitigate the severity of it, and I proceeded thus more gravely. " But, I presume, you do not think that all is wrong in the Church, and all right in every other quarter, so that the instant a man abandons the Church, he is in a state of salvation, go where he may, and believe what he may ?" " No," he cried, " I have no such thought ; I disclaim such a notion entirely." " Then," I rejoined, " it surprises me considerably that you have not taken more pains

to ascertain the man's sentiments. He is under your charge ; he is a weak man ; he may have adopted some damnable heresy ; his soul may be in jeopardy, and the loss of it may be laid to your account." Mr. Barwell was roused by this direct application to himself, and assured me with vehemence, that it was not for want of pains that he was ignorant of his man's real opinions in religion, but that he had often talked with him on this very subject, without being able to arrive at the correct knowledge of them ; and then he repeated what he had said before, " He is so eccentric, Sir, and so high."

I was pressing forward to other matters, and therefore I did not stop to investigate the precise meaning of these words ; but I conjectured the real truth to be, that the poor man was half-mad, and thought himself a prophet, although Mr. Barwell seemed disposed to disguise these facts ; and when I stated my intention of speaking to the man myself, he dissuaded me from it with the utmost eagerness. So I said, " See now the evils of dissent, gentlemen. Here is a man who has lived in your family, Mr. Barwell ; he observes that his master is not in union with the church, and has taken up religious opinions of his own ; he thinks, of course, that he may do the same as his master, without the slightest danger ; he does not dream indeed of any danger ;

he knows nothing of heresy and schism, or of the guilt which they incur ; and his master does not dare to talk to him about these sins, lest the charge may be retorted upon himself, and he himself may have to prove that he is not guilty of the same sins ; and so the poor man falls perhaps into the most impious and abominable errors. **Alas ! alas !** gentlemen, look to it, I beseech you ; for wherever there is separation, there is schism, and thereby heinous sin."

Mr. King had been hitherto silent, and, although uneasy, continued to be so now ; but Mr. Barwell exclaimed, " Then you should not force us to separate, Sir. They who are the causes of the separation, are guilty of the schism." " True," I said, " if they give *reasonable* cause. We separated from the Papists, because they refused to reform the corruptions which had grown up in the church. We restored, as nearly as we were able, the primitive doctrines ; and therefore our separation was no schism ; the schism was theirs. We doubted whether we could be saved with them, thinking, as we did, that there was something idolatrous in several of their practices ; and so we left them. But you do not charge the Church of England, I suppose, with idolatry, or with any false doctrine, or with any dangerous practice whatever ? " " I certainly do not," said Mr. Barwell. " Is there any other reason," I

inquired, “ why you think it difficult to be saved in communion with us ? ” “ None whatever,” he answered. “ Then,” I said, “ consider whether you have not taken away all the just grounds of separation, so as to leave a doubt as to your being free from the guilt of schism.”

Here Mr. Barwell was brought to a nonplus ; and, being unable immediately to answer, he rose from his seat, and seemed as if he intended to go ; but myself and Mr. King not moving, he sat down again ; and at length he said, “ I was brought up, Sir, from my infancy, to be a dissenter ; my father was a dissenter before me ; I continue in the same principles which I was taught from the beginning ; I have never changed any of them ; I am not guilty even of separation.” “ Undoubtedly this makes a difference,” I replied ; “ and it might be an ample excuse with multitudes of people—such an excuse, perhaps, as God will mercifully accept ; but it will be no excuse, I fear, for persons of a sufficient understanding to make themselves acquainted with the subject. ‘ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good,’ is the command of Scripture. You cannot say that you have done this, Mr. Barwell. You hold fast, indeed, what you were taught when a child ; but you know that the propriety of what you hold fast is called in question ; you know that yours is not the national religion ; it is impossible for you to be ignorant of this fact. Have

you, therefore, proved all things ? Have you tried the national religion by Scripture and by history, as your duty to God and your country requires ? Any other reason that you may be able to give for your present circumstances will not do for *you*, although it might do for ignorant people."

Mr. Barwell was very uneasy, but he endeavoured to preserve his goodhumour ; and he seemed very anxious to impress upon me that he was by no means hostile to the church. But, unfortunately, the hostility betrayed itself perpetually, and sometimes very strikingly, in the course of our conversation. However, at the present moment he asserted, that he had himself inquired into the differences between us to a certain degree, and had heard also a great deal from the several preachers under whom he had sat during his life ; and that, upon the whole, he preferred his own way. He liked the government and discipline better than ours ; and the doctrines which he considered most essential were preached, he said, more often with *them* than with *us* ; for he had been frequently at church in various places, and had made this remark with sorrow.

Here Mr. King ventured to interpose, and express his agreement with Mr. Barwell in the latter particular ; but at the same time he professed a great admiration for everything else belonging to the church, and especially for the liturgy. " Yes,"

said Mr. Barwell, “the liturgy is excellent indeed ; and I readily allow, that such prayers as are to be found there are superior to all extempore prayers : because, whilst they contain right petitions, the congregation also, knowing them beforehand, can join in them with cordiality.” “ It is very true,” I said ; “ and it seems hardly possible to conceive anything more inconsistent with social worship than extemporaneous prayer. That the congregation should unite with their minister in such a service is out of the question. They must hear him out, before they can decide whether they may approve his prayer or not ; and I should think they would be in a very painful suspense during the performance. It is morally certain also, that, in numerous instances, the prayer will be an ill-digested, incoherent rhapsody—disgraceful to any place of worship, and a contempt shown to God himself. The holy men of Scripture have given us many wise directions in regard to this point ; and it would be well for us all if we would follow them.”

“ We take the utmost care of this in our chapel,” said Mr. Barwell. “ We employ none there but persons well educated for the ministry at our academies in Yorkshire, at Homerton, near London, and elsewhere ; and we give them a fair trial beforehand ; and when we have acquired a perfect confidence in them that they will preach

our doctrines, and pray with propriety and feeling, then we invite them to preside over us, and not till then. We are very orderly, Sir, I assure you, in our whole management. We have no itinerant preachers, except for special purposes. We have a strict discipline, and regular ordinations by the laying on of hands." "Aye," I said, "but who are they that lay on their hands? where are your bishops? and who can be regularly ordained without their ministration? For fifteen hundred years from the beginning, the government of the church was by bishops, who are of apostolical or divine institution; and such a thing was never heard of, as that any man should take the office of a teacher and preacher in the church, but through *them*. Not that God might not bless others, though without episcopal ordination. But if you desert the prescribed means, you have no promise, and consequently have no claim to any blessing whatever. The promised blessing belongs only to the administrations of those, who are regularly and duly appointed, according to the forms handed down from the apostolical ages. Pray tell me, Sir, how you solve this difficulty."

Here I waited for his answer. I had said much more than I have now recorded. To have stated the whole would have been but a repetition of former arguments with Mr. King, and others. My present adversary appeared to resemble all the

rest with whom I had ever disputed on this topic ; that is, both he and they, as far as I could judge, knew nothing about it, and had never troubled themselves with making any inquiry. Mr. Barwell, however, amused me with saying, that he was quite sure he had both read and heard a complete answer to my imagined difficulty ; but that his memory was bad, and that he had totally forgotten it. Upon this I turned to Mr. King, and asked him whether he had got any fresh light upon this subject since our last conversation. He candidly confessed that he had not. “ I should have been surprised if you had,” I said ; “ for I fear, gentlemen, there is none to be obtained ; and it is a very serious matter for your consideration.” “ My mind is made up,” replied Mr. Barwell. “ For what would become of the whole Scotch nation, if no other than episcopal ordinations were valid ? I ask you, Sir ; has not the Act of Union with Scotland made their mode a legal one ? ” “ Certainly,” I answered, “ it has ; but it is one thing for a matter to be legal in the eye of man, and another thing for the same to be legal in the eye of God. Is a human statute, think you, as good as a divine statute ? Or can the latter be repealed by the former ? ” He would not venture to assert so much. “ Very well, then,” I rejoined ; “ you must go to the fountain-head, and to the practice of the primitive times, to learn the truth of

these matters ; and it would be your wisdom to tread upon the old, which are the safe foundations."

To this Mr. Barwell had nothing to answer, but only to express his firm reliance, that God would bless what was done with sincerity, and from pure motives ; and considering also the expense which was incurred in educating their ministers for his service. Fearing, therefore, lest I might irritate him by pushing the argument any further, I left this point, and resumed the comparison between our Liturgy and extemporaneous prayer. " Well, Sir," I said, " I wish it may be so ; and at all events every man must approve of your endeavours to procure a learned ministry. There have been men of the greatest learning amongst the dissenters at different periods ; and there may be again ; and you will feel the advantage of it in their discourses. But as to praying, no mortal man, I think, even after the utmost deliberation, and actuated by the warmest and soundest piety, will ever effect anything which must not fall infinitely short of our Liturgy. It is a work almost of divine inspiration." " I have already praised it," answered Mr. Barwell : " and I shall always be ready to give it the credit which is justly due to it. At the same time I am not blind to its defects." " What are *they* ?" I inquired eagerly. " I object to the burial service in particular," he answered. " The burial service !" I exclaimed with surprise. " Why,

Sir, it is one of the most wonderful, the most sublime, the most touching compositions which ever came from a human pen. In objecting to this you are totally at variance with the Puritans of former times; at least when they were entrapped by circumstances to pronounce an opinion upon it without prejudice or passion. I will tell you a short story about them. When those sects had got the upper hand, you may remember, they forbade the use of the prayer-book under pain of death; so bigoted were they, and furious against everything which they called a dead letter, and a beggarly element. Well, one of their eminent men died; and by some accident, I forget what, a more eminent minister of the establishment, now in ruins, was suddenly called upon to perform the funeral rites. But what did he do? Having the whole of our divine service deeply engraven in his memory, he repeated it word by word; astonished and affected the unsuspecting audience beyond all measure; and extorted from them the loudest commendations. Conceive now their rage and mortification, when he said, 'Gentlemen, this is the poor liturgy of the once-happy Church of England, which you have trampled under your feet.' I have not told you this story, perhaps, very accurately, but the substance is correct. See then how men are blinded by their bigotry and intolerance! And the occasion of mentioning those

cruel persecuting times induces me to warn you to take a lesson from the conduct of the Presbyterians and Independents who then ruled in succession with a rod of iron. The Romish church was intolerant enough when in power, and burnt the people by heaps at Smithfield. God grant that she may never obtain the same power again!" "Amen! amen!" said Mr. Barwell and Mr. King, with fervency. "Yes," I rejoined, "but the dissenters were equally intolerant, and pushed their cruelties to the greatest excess. They did not, indeed, burn men at the stake, but they killed numbers by the severity of their punishments; and what is most to be observed by *you*, the dominant sect would not tolerate the existence of any other. But the church of England, as I have argued with Mr. King before, is by law and by custom a tolerating church, and will ever remain so. Under *her* safeguard, of whatever denomination you are, you may sleep soundly and securely. She will never touch a hair of your heads, nor lift up a finger to violate your consciences. Beware then how you attempt to wrest her power out of her hands, or to diminish her influence! You will most probably in so doing pull down ruin on your own heads."

Here I paused; and they both immediately disclaimed all idea of weakening the church; Mr. King, I believe, with sincerity, but Mr. Barwell

looked at least as if he would be glad to try the experiment of levelling her with the dust. To humble him, therefore, a little more, if possible, for his ultimate good, I took down Lord Clarendon from a shelf, and opened to the memorable address of the Anabaptists and other sectarians, to Charles II., then in exile. When I had found the passages which were most to my purpose, I told them what I was about to read, and related as much of the history of the transaction as was necessary to make the passages intelligible. The first that I dwelt upon was this:—"As our sins have been the greatest causes, so our many follies and imprudences have not been the least means of giving both birth and growth to those many miseries and calamities, which we, together with three once most flourishing kingdoms, do at this day sadly groan under." "Gentlemen," I said, "here is a most candid confession, at least; but I shall not waste your time in making comments as I go on. The thing will speak with a trumpet-tongue for itself. Draw your own conclusions." I then came to this passage,—"We have been wandering, deviating, and roving up and down, this way and that way, through all the dangerous, uncouth, and untrodden paths of fanatic and enthusiastic notions, till now at last, but too late, we find ourselves intricated and involved in so many windings, labyrinths, and meanders of knavery, that nothing

but a divine clue of thread handed to us from heaven, can be sufficient to extricate us and restore* us." Again,—" What have we done, nay, what have we not done, which either hellish policy was able to contrive, or brutish power to execute? We have trampled under foot all authorities; we have laid violent hands upon our own sovereign; we have put a yoke, a heavy yoke of iron upon the necks of our own countrymen; we have broken often-repeated oaths, vows, engagements, covenants, protestations; we have betrayed our trusts; we have violated our faiths; we have lifted up our hands to heaven deceitfully; and that these our sins might want no aggravation to make them exceeding sinful, we have added hypocrisy to them all; we had impudence enough to say, Let the Lord be glorified; let Jesus Christ be exalted; let his kingdom be advanced; let the Gospel be propagated; let the saints be dignified; let righteousness be established." Again,—" We have sown the wind, and we have reaped a whirlwind; we have sown faction, and we have reaped confusion; when we looked for liberty, behold slavery; when we expected righteousness, behold oppression." Again,—" We were sometimes wise to pull down, but we now want art to build; we were ingenious to pluck up, but we have no skill to plant; we were strong to destroy, but we are weak to restore."

When I had finished, Mr. King was the first to speak. "This is certainly, Sir, as you called it, a very memorable address; and I perceive at once what effect you intend it to have upon *us*. But, for myself, I am satisfied in my own mind that my real wish is, that the church should prosper; and you know, Sir, that my sister and family are constantly there, and myself often; especially at the sacrament, the administration of which I entirely approve." "It is true," I answered; "and the respectability of your character makes me desirous that you should be always with us; nor can I understand why you waver and fluctuate—why you halt between two opinions. I have replied, I think satisfactorily, to every objection which you have ever raised in my presence to the matters connected with our church. Mr. Barwell, too, is so respectable in every way, that I am sorry to see him running the career to which all dissent, imperceptibly perhaps, but naturally, will conduct those who are involved in it."

Upon this Mr. Barwell assured me, as he had done before more than once, that he was devoid of hostile feelings towards the Church; but upon this occasion he added a fact: "I have a son, Sir, whom I sent to an eminent school under the establishment. There he was educated; and when he was ripe for the university, I gave him

his choice of going there, and of qualifying himself to be a clergyman. But he preferred medicine, in which he is now rising into notice. What better proof would you have than this, that I have no antipathy to the establishment?" "This is something certainly," I said; "but you must excuse me, Sir, if I have been guided by facts which have fallen under my own observation since you settled here. You have constantly and uniformly refused to subscribe to our charity-schools, which Mr. King does liberally." "I allow it," he answered; "but you should recollect that we have schools of our own to support, to which I contribute a due share." "Yes," I said, "but what need of these schools, except to bring up a race inimical to the church? Here is another serious grievance. It cannot be pretended that those children would be left to run wild in the streets without your aid. We have built schools at an enormous expense, and you seduce and bribe our scholars to leave us. From the beginning I have observed that, although you are yourself the member of a congregation which assembles in a distant parish, and although Sion Chapel, which is close upon our own border, has changed about through all possible opinions, according to the notions of the present owner, and has generally had a carpenter or even a soldier for its minister, you have unceasingly supported

it with your money, and sometimes with your attendance. Why, I ask, if you were not fearful that by its ruin dissent would be abolished altogether from amongst us?"

Mr. Barwell was nettled exceedingly, and blushed ; but at length recovering, he informed me, that Sion Chapel had now a respectable minister, who was a schoolmaster, permanently attached to it ; and that he had supported it all along with the view of providing a place of worship for the poor, and not from enmity to the establishment. " And are you aware," I asked, " that this permanent minister of Sion Chapel, like your own servant, is not so occupied with his duties there, no, nor with the duties of a schoolmaster, but that he has been able to indulge us now and then with a discourse and a rabble on Rector's Green ? Oh, what a scandal to religion ! What a total renunciation of all respectability ! "

Mr. Barwell at first denied that this had been the case. He felt sure that I had been misinformed ; and that the minister of Sion Chapel could not have been guilty of so great an irregularity, and so shameful a degradation of himself. However, I had the means of convincing him that it was too true ; for I had actually been compelled to warn that gentleman to keep within the boundaries which the law had assigned to him ; and

from that time the nuisance had ceased. Then betaking myself to the other point, I said, “ If you support dissenting chapels, because there is a deficiency of church-room for the people, you will soon have, I hope, a noble opportunity of supplying that deficiency. I shall endeavour, at least, to raise money, which, with the help of the public, under the auspices of our good old king, may enable us to build one or two churches. You will, no doubt, be so kind as to favour me with your subscription, when I am so far advanced as to ask it.” In an instant he started up from his chair, and exclaimed, “ No, no, Sir; I cannot do it!” I rose too, and said with feeling, “ Are you not then manifestly, whether you know it or not, prejudiced against us? Here is Mr. King; he has told me long ago, that if I can bring the matter to bear, he will subscribe handsomely towards it—for his rank.” Mr. King was gratified with this contrast between Mr. Barwell and himself; and declared his opinion, that so great and good a work deserved the universal support of the parishioners, be their differences in religion whatever they may. Mr. Barwell, however, shook his head, and stood firm even against the example and the assault of his brother-dissenter; but he assigned no reason; so, by way of leaving the matter open, I said, “ Well, well, we will talk no more about it now; you will think of it coolly at

home ; and at any rate, it will be some time before I shall ask you. But I wish to revert to what we have digressed from so largely : your objections to the burial-service,—what are they ? You did not mention them.”

He was much relieved by this change of the conversation ; and he replied at once, “ Why, Sir, you speak of the dead, although the most profligate wretches, as if they were sure of heaven.” “ Ah ! Mr. Barwell,” I exclaimed, “ here is another prejudice ; for I am morally certain that you have taken this notion from a book, which has been in great vogue, and that you have not inquired for yourself. I read that book too ; and I was astonished to find an interpolation, implying what you say, boldly thrust into the text of our service, and which, to my greater astonishment, had misled many even of our own church. But I will read you the genuine passages themselves.” So I took up my prayer-book, and showed him that there were no expressions of the sort attributed to us ; that we ventured, indeed, to throw out a humble hope, that our departed brother was resting in *Him*, who is the resurrection and the life ; but we affirmed that a perfect consummation and bliss were reserved for those only who died in the true faith of his holy name. The strongest expression actually to be met with in this service is, when we say, that it hath pleased God to take the soul of

our departed brother to himself ; but this must be explained consistently with the hope which we afterwards express. It would be absurd first to say, positively, that his soul is gone to heaven, and then to say that we hope it is. The phrase, therefore, of taking the soul to himself, means no more than, and is probably borrowed from, the text of Scripture, which asserts, that at death the body returns to the dust, and the soul to God who gave it.

Here Mr. Barwell allowed that he had been mistaken ; and that, although the words really used were sometimes perhaps too forcible, yet the whole service being taken together, they need not create offence ; and that the words which he expected to find in the service were a fabrication. "Very well, then," I said, "trust to nobody in future where you have so ready a means of exercising your own judgment ; and, especially, be careful how you admit, without examination, a calumny against the established church. Our prejudices are too apt to concur in anything to the detriment of those opposed to us, and thus sometimes we fall into grievous errors. We must, therefore, keep a constant guard upon ourselves."

Mr. Barwell did not seem to relish this lecture, though I put it generally, and included all the party ; so, remembering that he had said something twice or thrice about the ministers preaching

the doctrines of the congregation, in which I supposed that Mr. King would agree with him, I determined to discuss that point with them, if they were willing, and accordingly I began in this manner: "Well, Sir, we will let that pass. I wish to ask you something more about your ministers, and their preaching." "As you please," he said immediately, with a brightened countenance; "and in this respect, I think, it cannot be disputed, that we have a great advantage over churchmen; for if, after the education which they have received, and the probation which we give them before they are called to minister amongst us, they should nevertheless disappoint us, in not preaching at all, or in dwelling too little upon, the doctrines which we consider to be essential, we can dismiss them at once, without the least ceremony or difficulty." "Pardon me, Mr. Barwell," I replied, "if I cannot allow this to be an advantage. You seem indeed to *me* to begin at the wrong end,—that is, instead of taking the word of God from the mouth of the minister, which is the simple and natural proceeding, and what you are enjoined by Scripture to do, you yourselves—that is, every congregation separately—prescribe to the minister precisely what he shall preach; he must take the word of God from *you*, and not from the Gospel; and submit to your varying capricious criticisms; and be careful to please you too, if he wish to

retain his situation. This is bad for both parties. How will the minister dare to rebuke with all authority, and to lash the vices of his hearers, knowing, as he does, that they may turn him out when his sermon is finished? And as for yourselves, you go to your conventicle with a sort of inquisitorial spirit, rather than in the spirit of meekness and docility;—you go to sit as judges, rather than as learners, or worshippers;—aye, and possessing the power of punishment, you go with too great a disposition to exercise that power upon every little whim, or caprice, or dissatisfaction with your preacher. The real advantage of this system I cannot see, if your end be, not merely to be pleased or deluded, but to be made good Christians."

"If the matter were always, or even very often, as you represent it," said Mr. Barwell, "I must grant it would not be defensible; but the ministers being educated first of all in the very doctrines which we profess, and afterwards going through the probation of which I spoke, we have the best security that everything will go on well, and that there will be no necessity of resorting to any harsh expedients. In point of fact, in our own congregation we have had no change for some years, nor is there any likelihood of a change; but in *your* church, what is to become of the people, if

the minister be immoral, or preach for gospel *that* which is no gospel? You have no remedy."

"Pardon me again," I replied; "we have many plain and straightforward remedies. If a clergyman, not enjoying a benefice, give scandal to the church by his bad life or doctrines, he may be removed after due notice by his principal, the rector or vicar of the parish in which he officiates; or the bishop of the diocese may revoke his license at once. If the offender be beneficed, it is not so easy to dispossess him of a freehold property; but the ecclesiastical courts are open to all complainants, and various processes of law may be instituted, according to the nature and degree of the crime. He may be suspended from his functions; he may have his tithes sequestrated; he may be deprived of his benefice altogether; he may even have his gown stripped off over his head—that is, he may be degraded from holy orders, and reduced to the condition of a layman. In short, the discipline of our church keeps her ministers in such admirable order, that it is astonishing how few there are, out of so numerous a body, who stand in need of any severe correction. You must consider, too, that there are various ranks and emoluments in our church, to which the younger clergy naturally aspire; and that many of them have no passport to a higher station but the zeal and

talent which they display in a lower ; so that if they had no sense of what their sacred office demands from them, yet their own interest alone would bind them to a strict attention to character. Character is everything to them."

" Yes, Sir," said Mr. Barwell, interrupting me, " there is some guard in this, undoubtedly ; but doctrine, doctrine—you say little of *that* ; and your congregations have no control over it whatever." " Nor ought they," I replied with vivacity, " as a general principle. This is what I insisted upon before—that they should come to learn, and not to censure, or prescribe. It must be a flagrant corruption of doctrine indeed to demand *their* interference : a thing which scarcely ever occurs, secured as we are against it. I remember but one instance during my own time :—a Socinian had crept into a benefice ; but when his heresy became known, his benefice was taken from him. In fact, the education of our ministers at the Universities, and their examinations for degrees and orders, and above all, the oaths which they take, are the amplest security that can possibly be required against heterodoxy ; so that the congregation may generally be quite at their ease, and under no necessity of wasting the precious moments of public worship in speculating whether their minister preach the Gospel to them or not. The security indeed is not given directly to the

congregation, which it ought not to be, but to the heads of the Church and the country at large. It is sufficient for the congregation to know, (which they always do know by the reading aloud of legal documents,) that the minister set over them by the law of the land has given the requisite security, that he will preach to them no other doctrines than such as our Articles approve. Those are the doctrines which he is appointed to teach them faithfully. From *them* he has nothing whatever to learn. In every respect he should be as independent of them as possible—neither fearing them, nor hoping for anything from them. For the moment these passions begin to operate, he will also begin, it is too likely, to preach smooth things to them; not that of which they stand most in need, but what will humour their fancies, coincide with their pursuits, and prejudices, and put them into a state of complacency with themselves. But our Lord said admirably to his disciples, ‘ Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you ! ’ ”

Here I paused; and it appeared that neither of my visitors was satisfied with the positions which I had laid down. To be passive under instruction was a thing which they did not relish, and to which they could not submit. There was a pride in assuming to be upon a level with their preachers in doctrinal knowledge which they could

not relinquish. To censure them, to dictate to them, to remove them, was a power which gave an idea of self-importance highly gratifying to their feelings. However, neither Mr. King nor Mr. Barwell adventured to say this openly; but amongst other things which showed themselves in the discussion that arose between us, one was the old story, that there were certain doctrines which they were determined to have continually, and without which indeed they could not consider the Gospel to be preached to them at all; and consequently as a matter of course, whenever they heard a sermon without these doctrines, they condemned the preacher, and pitied the hard case of those who were forced by circumstances to sit under him.

After much beating about, without coming to any conclusion, I said, "Pray tell me, Mr. Barwell, whether our Lord and his apostles enjoined the virtue of temperance or not." "Unquestionably they did," was his answer. "And are we not," I continued, "most tremendously warned by the same infallible authority, that all drunkards shall be cast into hell-fire?" "It is very true," he replied. "Then we may infer, I suppose, that this branch of temperance which we will call sobriety, is in the divine view of great importance." "We may certainly," he said. "And some of the reasons why this virtue is of so high

excellence are evident enough, are they not?" "They are," he answered. "Is it not good for the individuals themselves, for their families, for their country? Does it not enable them to bring more fully into action all their powers and faculties, both of body and mind, with which God has blessed them, for their own welfare and the welfare of the community?" He allowed it. "On the contrary, does not drunkenness enervate the body, and unhinge and enfeeble the mind, and degrade the man to a level with the beast? Does not the drunkenness of a parent debilitate the offspring, and introduce disease into a whole family, and spread it perhaps from generation to generation?" He granted it at once. "Probably then," I said, "it was on these accounts, and for a thousand other reasons, if there were time to enumerate them, that God has enjoined sobriety and forbidden drunkenness, by the mouth of his Son and of his holy prophets, under pain of the most terrible chastisements." "No doubt of it," he answered. "Well then," I inquired, "are sobriety and drunkenness of less or more consequence in the present state of society than they were in the times when the Scriptures were written?" "Very likely of more consequence," he replied. "Of course then," I rejoined immediately, "it is more necessary than ever to preach upon these topics; to explain what sobriety and

drunkenness are ; to enforce what our Lord and others have said about them ; and more especially to bring home to men's minds the awful denunciations of the Gospel."

By this time Mr. Barwell appeared to be aware, that the same argument might be extended to all the virtues and vices, and that by assenting to my propositions, one after the other, there would grow up, under his own sanction, a complete moral preacher, the very character which he abhorred ; he began therefore to hesitate, and to be very reluctant to answer, which compelled me to go over the same ground again and again, until he admitted everything which I had advanced. I then proceeded :—" Suppose," I said, " that one day, when the minister is preaching about drunkenness, another day about lying, another about cheating, another about cursing and swearing, and so on, there should be persons present on each occasion who are guilty of these vices, it is not likely that they will be pleased with him, is it ?" " No," he answered. " But if they are displeased with him," I continued, " will not *that* circumstance rather tend to shew that he was in the right to assail them ? For their displeasure arises, most probably, from their being in love with the vices which are lashed ; whereas if they were inclined to get rid of them, they would see what a great service the preacher has done them

in awaking their consciences, and demonstrating to them the peril of their condition. In short, whether they are pleased or displeased, he must assail them if he would save their souls. And suppose again, that, smarting with the wounds which he has inflicted upon them, they should cry out against him, that he does not preach the Gospel, that he is one of your moral men, should he be deterred by this insinuation from pursuing the line which he had chosen ; from preaching, in fact, as Christ himself and his Apostles did ? Would he not rather be confirmed in the opinion, that he had found out what those men wanted most, and that it was his duty to tell them, that they were slumbering on a precipice ? ”

I now stopped for an instant ; but as my visitors were unwilling to interpose anything, I resumed, and said ; “ I will tell you a true little story. A farmer of this parish whom you both know very well, who attends *your* chapel, Mr. Barwell, and sometimes Sion Chapel, and every other place of worship in the neighbourhood, except the church, came there, however, one Sunday morning, out of compliment to myself, as I believe, because I had done him a favour the very day before. You are aware what a drunkard this farmer is, and that his vice has reduced him to bankruptcy. Well ; so it happened, that this very vice was the main subject of my discourse, and I painted it in all its

deformity, and in the ugliest colours. I was not sorry to do this ; I thought it a providential occurrence. The picture which I drew might have startled him. The terrors of the Lord, which I set in array against him, might have confounded him ; and then he might have looked for the right way to salvation, and have thanked me as his greatest benefactor. But no ! his darling sin had beset him too closely to be quitted thus. He came no more to church. Whether he is regular in his attendance at your chapel, you Mr. Barwell know best. Wherever he goes he exclaims against his parish priest ; he laments that the Gospel is not preached in the parish church ; he laughs the clergy to scorn as moral preachers. Now, what do you think of *this*, Gentlemen ? If he had the power, he would, no doubt, remove me from my office, and join in inviting another minister to take it, who would flatter him with more agreeable doctrines, and tell him he had nothing to do, but to lay hold of the righteousness of Christ, and that would save him."

Here Mr. King was silent, remeinbering his former discomfiture ; but Mr. Barwell, who was arguing with me for the first time, exclaimed, " and is not *that* the thing, Sir, which we must all do to be saved ? " " Yes," I said, " if it were properly understood ; but such men as Mr. Storry either cannot, or will not, understand it. Does *he*

show the sorrow, the contrition, the remorse, of the Magdalene ? Does *he* cry out with Zaccheus, ‘ the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and, if I have defrauded any man, I restore him fourfold ? ’ But unless he does this, he will only deceive himself, if he thinks that his faith has saved him, and that his sins are forgiven. No, no ! he must abandon his own wickedness before he can lay hold of Christ’s righteousness. If there be any one doctrine, therefore, which deserves to be dwelt upon, by a Gospel-preacher, more than another, it is the doctrine of repentance ; which St. Paul, whom I suppose you will allow to have been the greatest of evangelical preachers, assures us was his constant topic. But I may safely defy any man to preach the doctrine of repentance with propriety, unless he probes every vice in its turn, to the bottom, and paints the opposite virtue in all its loveliest charms. And thus, Gentlemen, your Gospel-preacher becomes of necessity, if you choose to call him so, a moral-preacher.” This I said smiling ; but then I added with a serious air, “ Beware how you treat such a preacher with disdain.”

Here I dismissed them, as I observed that they were very uneasy, and somewhat angry that they could not defend themselves. However, Mr. Barwell in departing surprised me with saying, that he was happy to have become acquainted with

me ; and that he should think himself much honoured, if I would return his visit.—I promised to do so, and so ended our conference.

§ VI. MR. AND MISS KING.

Being very desirous to avail myself of the opening for further conversations with Mr. Barwell, I soon called at his house ; but I was not admitted. Nor did one refusal discourage me ; but at length I forbore to press him any more, when not only the refusal appeared to be systematic, but also he made me no apology, although we frequently encountered each other on the roads. On these occasions, too, if I stopped to give him the opportunity of saying something, he generally passed on with a simple salutation ; so it was evident, I thought, that he had no wish to have anything more to do with me. Still I did not relinquish my plan of getting the sanction of his name for the better accomplishment of my plan with regard to some new churches. One day, therefore, when that subject was uppermost in my mind, and I espied him advancing from afar in the centre of the road, I quitted the side-path on which I was walking, and met him face to face. This move-

ment of mine showed so manifest a determination on my part to talk with him, his direct progress too being barred by my position, that it was impossible for him to pass me without incivility, or without making an entire change in his route. Thus circumstanced, therefore, he stood quite still, and resigned himself to the event, whatever it might be. My two eldest boys were with me, and amused Mrs. Warton highly, upon their return home, with a very accurate account of what struck them most in the scene which they witnessed.

“ Why, Mr. Barwell,” I thus accosted him, “ you are as great a walker as myself. I find you in every corner of my parish, the most remote.” “ Air and exercise are necessary to my health,” he answered; “ I cannot exist without them; and I vary my walks as much as I can, to take off from the sameness, and to make them a little more entertaining.” “ Do you observe,” I said, “ how thickly-peopled some of those parts are which are so distant from the parish church?” “ Everybody observes it,” he replied. “ None who walk with their eyes open can fail of seeing it; and I regret that things should be so unfortunate, I assure you.” “ You *regret* it?” I said with vivacity. “ Regret is useless; why not remedy the evil at once, and build them a church of their own? We seem likely to have now a

splendid opportunity, which I have already mentioned to you ; and I certainly calculated upon *your* assistance. *You* are not indifferent with respect to religion ; you value it, I know. Why will you not help me, therefore, to give the comfort of it to others ? ”

“ Have you forgotten, Dr. Warton,” he replied rather sternly, “ what I told you of my sentiments in religion ? I am a dissenter from your church.” “ No,” I said, “ I have not forgotten it by any means ; but I had hoped that my own arguments were not forgotten by yourself. Remember, however, Sir, I beseech you, how expansive Christian charity is, and how it mocks all boundaries. What ! ” I exclaimed, raising my tone, and with my stick drawing a circle on the ground between us, “ would you confine yourself within these narrow limits ? Would you never step over this short impassable line to assist your fellow-creatures in a matter of the utmost concern to them, both temporally and eternally ? What ! are you so bigoted to the principles of a petty sect that you will not open your hand to any but those who are likely to become your proselytes ? Think of the noble picture which the Psalmist draws of the great God of the universe. ‘ Thou openest thine hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness.’ *That* is the pattern to copy after, Sir ; and I must frankly confess, I shall never be able to

admire a party, whatever their pretences to religion may be, whose minds are so contracted by their own system, that they will never do good out of their own pale. Believe me, this is to mistake Christianity, yes, and nature too, altogether."

Mr. Barwell was apparently as much confounded as the ambassador of Antiochus, when Popilius the Roman drew a circle all around him, and commanded him not to leave it, until he had given a definitive answer to his demands. I had not drawn a circle, indeed, around Mr. Barwell, with so peremptory an order, but the novelty of the circumstance, and the remarks which it had suggested to me, disturbed him exceedingly, and smote his conscience, no doubt, with an unusual pang. Accordingly he dropped immediately his first excuse, that he was a dissenter, and began to talk with much hesitation about the state of his pecuniary affairs, and the particular difficulties which encumbered him at the present moment. "Oh!" I said, "if your circumstances do not allow you to aid me in this work of charity, which I may truly call noble, and even divine, I can have nothing further to urge. Charity must begin at home, as the proverb rightly informs us; but it will never approach to any resemblance of Christian charity until it impels us to deny ourselves, and embraces within its circle, wider and wider spreading, kindred, neighbours, enemies,

mankind. Your subscription would have been useful to the parish, and creditable to yourself; but I relinquish all thought of it, of course, if any present necessity compels you to restrain your benevolence within the compass of your own family and private connexions."

Having spoken thus, I left the road free to him; and, as he passed on, which he did immediately, he replied, " Well, well, Dr. Warton, I will consider the matter; I will not make up my mind yet about it; perhaps I may give something after all; but I cannot tell what it may be." " Oh! thank you, thank you," I cried after him, " I want no extravagant sum; if you think, when the time comes, that you could spare me ten pounds, I should be amply satisfied." He shook his head and made me no other answer; but three days after, when I met him again, and asked him if he had determined upon the sum, he said coolly, " I have determined nothing about it at all, Sir; but I will not positively pronounce, that I shall give nothing." This disconcerted me, and I did not attempt to reply. The good impression I feared was almost erased, even so soon, and the old leaven of party-feeling had probably resumed its influence, and might now reign, perhaps, to my cost, more impregnable than ever. However it did not; he gave me his name for the ten pounds, but did not live to pay them, and to see many

years after the sacred buildings rise, to bring glory to God and men. If death had not cut off his intentions, he would not have walked by them perpetually, as many do, with the self-reproach that he had wanted the spirit to give.

To return now to Mr. King, the chief personage of my drama. About this time he came to me to announce his intention of leaving the parish, and going to reside upon his property in the West of England; and when I had said the usual things on such an occasion, I added, seriously, "There is one view of the subject, Mr. King, in which I take some pleasure. It will now be very possible for you to begin a new system with respect to religious matters. Your connexions here will all be broken by your removal, as a thing of course, and without exposing you to any unpleasant remarks. You have no religious connexions where you are going; you leave them all behind you; you may now without any difficulty attach yourself to the church, and bind yourself more closely to your own family, and appear in the new place as really members of the same body, and not at variance with one another, upon the most momentous of all subjects. Excuse me, if I say, that, in my opinion, it would be unwise, and even perverse, if you were to set about, immediately on your arrival there, to hunt out for seceders from the church, and to join with them, and countenance their proceedings.

This would show too much of the sectarian spirit. Leave that spirit here, I beseech you earnestly ; you have been actuated by it too long already ; it is unworthy of you ; it is awfully condemned in the word of God. Believe me *now*, Mr. King, that I speak entirely for your own good ; you are going, and I shall have no further responsibility with respect to your conduct, which will affect *me* in no way whatever. If you ever thought so meanly of me as to imagine, that, in my former conversations with you, I sought my own glory in the increase of my followers, you can entertain such a notion no longer. We shall most probably never meet again ; and so great will be the distance between us, that, perhaps, I shall not even hear of you again ; so that if you follow my advice, my vanity, it is most likely, will not be flattered with the news of it."

Mr. King was evidently touched. The occasion, the matter, and the manner of my little speech to him, all conspired to work upon his feelings ; but, after no long pause he said, collectedly enough, " Whatever may become of *me*, Dr. Warton, I am bound to thank *you* for your advice, and I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of it. It is sincere, and well meant, I am sure. But we still differ about the church. I love the church, Sir, I hope, as much as any man ; but I mean the church written in heaven. Yet I love the church of England too ; but I cannot confine my love to one par-

ticular church, which is only a branch of the great vine. I wish to belong to the great, universal, invisible church, which embraces all true Christians, under whatever denominations they may be classed, or wherever they may be scattered through the world. *That* is the church, Sir, which I love with my whole heart; and it seems to *me* to be quite immaterial, whether I belong to the church of England, or not. Oh! no, Sir; forms and places are nothing. Did not our Saviour himself tell us, that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship *him*, must worship him in spirit and in truth?"

Mr. King, beaten so often, once more considered himself, as I plainly perceived by his tone, to be entrenched in an impregnable position; but his main defence, I humbly think, was broken through in an instant. "I am always glad," I replied coolly, "when persons disputing with me quote texts of Scripture. For, by quoting Scripture, they declare that they allow the authority of Scripture; and then the interpretation of the texts which they quote ought to settle the dispute at once. So it should be now. You quote a text to show that God's true worshippers need not attend to forms, or places; but my good Sir, in my opinion, you mistake your text entirely. And I must say, that as you have made similar mistakes so often before, I rather wonder that you

still adhere to the old method of depending upon single texts, torn from the context; which context, if you studied it attentively, would generally lead you to the true meaning of the texts themselves, and a very different meaning sometimes, from *that* which appears on the surface, and which seems besides so plain and simple."

This preface threw him into a commotion. He prided himself upon knowing Scripture well, and every proof of his misunderstanding it was a bitter mortification to him. So he looked at me with alarm, and yet with a mixture of surprise; but at the same time with more confidence than a man ought to have done, who had been repeatedly convicted of error. I proceeded thus:—

"Now I ask you, Mr. King," I said, "whether it was not the intention of our Lord to reprove the Samaritans for abstaining from the worship of God at Jerusalem, and for pretending that there was no necessity of going up there for such a purpose, but that it was sufficient to imitate their fathers who had worshipped him upon Gerizim, a mountain in Samaria itself near to the town of Sychar?" He looked as if he had forgotten the circumstances; so I related them to him from the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel; then I continued,—"This presumption of the Samaritans, you see, which led to the neglect of the right place, and the right form of worship, led also to

something worse ; a mistake as to the right object of worship. ‘ Ye worship ye know not what,’ Christ said of them ; and he insinuated also, that their own independent worship made them forgetful of the great truth, that salvation was to come through the Jews alone. In this history one place and one form are manifestly set up by an unerring authority above another place and another form ; and when it is affirmed that in a short time God should not be worshipped in either of the places, or by either ritual, this is a prophecy that the temples at Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim would both soon be destroyed, and the usual services there in consequence rendered impossible. This might settle the question of comparison between Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim, but it has nothing to do with the general question about places and forms. It leaves *that* as it was ; only we are warned, in whatever place or manner we worship God, always to remember that he is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth. But because we are reminded of this important circumstance, that none but spiritual worship will avail us in the sight of God, would it not be preposterous to infer from it, that God cares nothing about places or forms ? No, no ; as the whole account shows us that the Samaritans were in error, in choosing a place for themselves, and exalting it above the holy consecrated place, so it

should induce us to search conscientiously, whether there may not be one place better than another, and one form better than another now. For if there be, by discovering and attaching ourselves to them, it is likely that our worship, founded on so excellent a basis, will have more of those acceptable qualities about it, of spirit and of truth; and we should no longer be liable to the charge of worshipping we know not what. The Samaritans were guilty of schism first, and then, as a natural consequence, they fell into heresy."

Whether I was right or wrong in my whole interpretation of this passage, Mr. King was quite unable to controvert it; and at any rate, his countenance declared evidently that I had said enough to compel him to allow, in his own secret breast, that he had applied his text improperly. But he made no verbal acknowledgment of it, nor did he seem disposed to speak at all. So I went on to another of his assertions, which was very vague and uncertain. "You talk of the church written in heaven, Mr. King," I said. "It is a glorious thing to belong to *that* church, certainly; but there is no warrant from Scripture to suppose, that it is unnecessary to belong to any visible church on earth, in order to enable us to get into the invisible one; or that we may roam from one visible congregation to another without mischief, just as our fancy and feelings, good or bad, may incite us.

On the contrary, Scripture lies the other way. What can the sacred writers mean, when they talk so much as they do about the peril of being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and about avoiding divisions, and cultivating peace and unity? If men, of their own will, might gather congregations together, or follow whom they pleased, what need was there to caution them about schisms, which could not have occurred? Under such a latitudinarian constitution of churches the very name of schism must have been unknown. But I will put a case, Mr. King. Suppose you had lived in Crete, when St. Paul sent Timothy to be bishop of the island; would you have obeyed him, or would you have thought yourself at liberty to set up some other person for your minister at your own pleasure?"

"I would have obeyed him, Sir," he replied. "Why?" I asked. "It is not written, that he worked miracles in order to prove his commission and authority to preach in Crete, and to collect a church there, and afterwards to govern it." "Yes, Sir," he said; "but as he came by the order of St. Paul, who was an undoubted Apostle, *that* was sufficient." "Very well," I resumed; "then you allow, that, whilst Timothy continued to exercise the powers delegated to him by St. Paul, you and all the Christians in Crete were bound to obey him in every matter which concerned the

doctrine and discipline of the Cretan church?" "I do," he answered; "there can be no doubt about it." "Well," I said, "one of his powers, and a very important one, was to ordain priests for the better furthering of the work of his ministry. He *did* ordain many, no doubt, and assigned to them severally the spheres of their office. In their proper spheres would you have obeyed them, or would you not?" "I would, Sir," he replied. "Yes," I said, "to have separated from them, and to have denied them obedience—and, still more, to have joined yourself to an unauthorised, self-appointed teacher, in despite of *them*, would have been downright schism;—would it not?" "I cannot contradict it," he answered. "Undoubtedly," I said, "it would have been a most sinful species of schism—a most flagrant breach of the order and peace of the church. Yet we know that such things actually occurred, and we know also with what horror they were contemplated in those days. Can you conceive anything more awful, or indeed more strikingly conclusive, as to this matter of peace and unity, than the declaration of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians? 'There is one body,' he saith, 'and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' Should not the mere reflection upon this one

noble sentence stimulate every Christian of every age to endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace ? Does it not at once carry conviction home, at least, to every meek and lowly Christian mind ? ”

I spoke with great earnestness ; and Mr. King, applying the remark to himself in consequence, was not a little disturbed ; but he replied, nevertheless, with an affected calmness, “ This does not touch *me*, Dr. Warton ; I have told you that I should have obeyed the ministers appointed by Timothy ; I should not, therefore, have been liable to the charge of schism at all.” “ Then why have you not obeyed *me*, Mr. King ? ” I demanded, elevating my voice. “ Is it not schism to separate from *me*, to whom the same office and authority, which *they* had, has been committed for the spiritual direction of this parish ? ”

At first he hesitated, as if he did not know how to answer these questions ; but, having soon collected himself, he said, “ Surely there is a wide difference, Dr. Warton. I have the utmost respect for your public office and your private character ; but I cannot put you in the same rank with Paul and Timothy.” “ Nor with Timothy’s priests ? ” I asked, with a smile ; for he seemed to be shuffling a little in overlooking *them*, and comparing me with Paul and Timothy only. “ Suppose,” I said, “ that I laid no claim to be in the

same rank with an apostle and bishop, as I certainly do not, yet perhaps I need not derogate from my office so far as not to put it on the same footing with that of Timothy's priests." He hesitated again, and at last asserted, that we were now so far distant from the fountain-head, it would be impossible for him to consider any minister of the present day as being on a par with the primitive teachers and pastors of the church. "The authority," he affirmed, "was now quite lost."

"Tell me, then," I said, "if you can, the several periods in which the spiritual authority, enjoyed by the priests of Timothy's ordination, and submitted to by yourself, began to be diminished in the hands of their successors, and finally became extinct; so that, according to your own notions, if you had lived in those periods, your obedience to that authority might have been safely lax in one period, and entirely withdrawn in another. I should be extremely obliged to you to give me an account of this matter, which is of vast moment to us all." He was silent; so I went on. "Look back, Mr. King, through the history of the church in past ages, and lay your finger upon the precise age when this lamentable event occurred. I justly call it lamentable; for it would be so in the highest degree. From the moment that so essential an authority was weakened, you might expect to see the loss of that decency and order which is

one of the beautiful marks of the true church ; sad distractions springing up, and terrible breaches made in fellowship and charity ; not only one man affirming that he followed the doctrine of Peter, another that of Paul, and a third that of Apollos, but ten thousand times worse : every man following whomsoever he would, ordained or unordained ; a Babel, in short, instead of a city which is at unity with itself." He was still silent, but more and more uneasy. I went on again. " You have not studied this subject, Mr. King, as a person should have done, who was determined to act according to his own notions, and yet you have boldly drawn conclusions for yourself, and assumed a most dangerous license, as if you had been perfectly acquainted with it, and could not possibly be mistaken. I will tell you one fact, if you will permit me. There were men in ancient times, some foolish, some conceited, some presumptuous, some wicked, and urged on by the devil himself, who broached monstrous heresies ; they who then wielded the church authorities, condemned those heresies and excommunicated the heretics themselves, who thenceforward, in most instances, drew disciples after them, and set up what they called a church of their own, in opposition to the true church of Christ. Thus the evil began in heresy and ended in schism. These sins are cause and effect, constantly and recipro-

cally; whichever begins, the other follows as a sure attendant in its train. But mark what a great Apostle once said, namely, ‘ that there *must* be heresies.’—Why? The reason is awful and alarming,—to try the faith of the rest of us, and to see who will abide by sound doctrine and who will not. Heresies and schisms then are permitted by Providence to prove us, whether we will adhere to the faith once delivered to the saints; but woe, nevertheless, to all those by whom the offence cometh! These are grave and weighty affairs, Mr. King, and should be long and deeply considered before we embrace anything new. Novelty itself is a presumption of error; all novelties of old came from acknowledged heretics. Our own reformation, as I have explained before, was no introduction of novelties, but a return to the primitive standard of faith and discipline.”

Mr. King betrayed, as on former occasions, by every look and gesture, how much I had disturbed and confounded him; but fatal experience prevented me from being sanguine as to the result. If I had been a novice, I should have fancied that the result could not but have been favourable; but the sectarian temper and character being now thoroughly known to me, I doubted whether the impression would be more than momentary. Indeed, I thought I saw now, through every external

appearance, that the mind and disposition of my antagonist remained the same. He sat still, however, as if he wished me not to stop where I had done, so I resumed in this manner.

“ The priests of Timothy, Mr. King, you allowed that you would obey.” “ I did,” he answered. “ Well,” I said, “ one of them, no doubt, when Timothy died, became bishop in Timothy’s place ; would you obey him whilst he was a priest, and withdraw your obedience when he became a bishop ? ” “ No, Sir,” he replied, “ I would obey him still.” “ Very well,” I said ; “ now then he himself ordains priests ; would you obey *them* ? ” He saw his difficulty, and declined answering ; so I answered for him. “ The authority is in *their* hands, Mr. King, and they cannot be disobeyed without sin. It came originally from heaven, and whoever gainsays it, must take care lest haply he be found to fight against heaven. God sent his own Son into the world to be our first great High-priest under the new covenant of grace. Christ took not the office to himself, but, observe, he was appointed to it by God. Well, when Christ had finished his ministry, he now exercised the power of appointment, and sent others as God had sent *him* ; and these others, when they themselves were about to depart from this world, ordained successors by the laying on of their hands, to keep the sacred charge of doc-

trine and government, thus entrusted to them. In this manner it has gone on to the present day ; and therefore the same authority belongs of right to those who have legitimately succeeded to it, but to none other. Every other, in short, is a usurper. The promise of Christ to be with his apostles to the end of the world, is incapable of fulfilment in any other way, than by his blessing upon the office itself, legitimately obtained, and by his pouring out of the spirit upon those who hold the office in the right line from himself. Do you really imagine that anybody, be he who he may, is entitled to this promise, because he chooses, forsooth, to set himself up for a spiritual guide of others ?”

“ But wicked ministers, Sir,” he interposed at last with eagerness ; “ what do you say of *them*? Are they to be obeyed like the good shepherds? I suppose, Sir, you will not deny that there have been in all ages wolves in sheeps’ clothing?” “ No,” I replied, “ I will not deny it, certainly ; there both have been, and always will be, wicked men in all stations, even the most sacred. Could I have forgotten Judas Iscariot ? But the same person who chose Judas Iscariot to be an apostle, has settled the question of obedience for ever. ‘ The scribes and pharisees,’ he said, ‘ sit in the seat of Moses ;’ his authority has been regularly transmitted to *them* ; they are wicked, but the

authority itself is not therefore extinguished ; it abides always, and in whosever hands it may be, it is the same, and must be reverenced and obeyed ; only, if it be in the hands of wicked men, ‘ do not after their works.’ ”

“ But what if their doctrines be bad, Sir ;” he exclaimed, “ as well as their lives ? may I not refuse them obedience *then*, and separate from them without sin,—would it not be sin, indeed, to continue with them ?” “ The doctrines of *some* legitimate ministers may be bad, no doubt,” I replied ; “ even the heresiarchs, of whom I spoke, were probably, *some* of them, properly ordained to the office of teachers and pastors ; for it is said of them, ‘ they went out from us, but were not of us.’ With respect to these, however, there was no difficulty ; they showed their cloven foot by separating, and setting up altar against altar ; and therefore obedience was due to them no longer. The real difficulty is, when the doctrine of a minister of the church, still holding his station in the church, becomes corrupted and dangerous to those over whom he is placed ; or more and more, when the doctrine of the great mass of ministers becomes corrupt, as was the case with the church of Rome, and dangerous thereby to a whole nation. But you know, Sir, we have handled this question before, and have acknowledged, that, in such a case, a separation is absolutely necessary ; and we have

settled also, that *they* are the schismatics who refuse to be reformed, not they who reform themselves, and return to primitive doctrine. Observe, however, I assume, in this statement, that the doctrine is known to be corrupt and dangerous ; I do not mean to allow by this, that any person who chooses may separate from the established church of his country, because he *thinks* that the doctrine of his own appointed minister is corrupt and dangerous. No, no ; this would open the floodgates for every wild fancy to pour in upon us, and for a deluge of absurdities and impieties. Let every man take heed how he acts upon such a principle. Who were the great reformers, whose conduct we justify, and whose opinions we follow, and who laid the foundations of our excellent Protestant English church ? They were men of the greatest talents, the greatest learning, and the greatest piety, whom this nation has ever produced ; fit men to lead a nation in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the consequent settlement of true doctrine, and in casting off the errors and corruptions which time and worldly policy had introduced. But every man now pretends to be a judge of doctrine, who knows nothing of the original Scriptures, or of the history of the church, or of the opinions and principles of our early reformers. A most astonishing presumption, which will, undoubtedly, be condemned by *him* who loves the humble, the docile,

and the ingenuous ; those who are not inclined to think themselves wiser than their appointed teachers, or to set up an assumed authority above a lawful one ! Every man now has an interpretation for himself ; every man now has a doctrine of his own ; why, the Apostle condemned this, even when the interpretation and the doctrine were right !—what would he say of the state of things for which *you* contend, that persons not educated for such inquiries, and unable to go to the fountain-head, should have liberty, nevertheless, to follow their own vain surmises, and break the sacred bond of union which links the members of Christ's church together ?”

I paused here, before I had completely answered the whole of the case which he had suggested to me. He had been uneasy throughout, as usual ; but he soon said, “ I hope, Sir, you do not consider *me* to be ignorant of the true doctrines of the Gospel, although I am ignorant of the Greek language ?” “ If you will excuse me, Mr. King,” I replied, “ I cannot consider you to be a good interpreter of Scripture, because I have found you so often wrong in your interpretations. With respect to doctrines, unquestionably you know the most important, which indeed anybody may know without scholarship ; but then, for want of scholarship, and in consequence of following bad, unlearned guides, you have introduced new doc-

trines not to be found in the Gospel,—like that of imputed righteousness; and you prize these above the real doctrines, and are offended that your lawful minister does not preach them. But he, most probably, being able to compare our defective translation with the original expressions, and to take a comprehensive view of all God's revelations, not a man of a single-text-religion, knows very well what he is about, and treads steadily and safely in the steps of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, and would thoroughly furnish you to all good works. However, in regard to the doctrines about which you are *not* mistaken, yet there is an error of judgment even *there*; for, if you do not hear them all in every discourse, you are ready to accuse your minister, as if he did not profess them all.* Why, in the whole sermon on the Mount, does Christ say a single word about the greatest of all the doctrines of Christianity, that he was to be a sin-offering for us? Not one word, certainly; yet, I presume, you would not tell *him*, that he mistook his own Gospel. No, nor does he say one single word about our own works not being meritorious in the sight of God. On the contrary, his representation of the graces and virtues in that sermon might lead you to suppose, that they *were* meritorious; and he has never once guarded himself against the possibility of your making such a supposition. Yet, I presume, you would not tell him, that he was a mere moral preacher, a Pela-

gian, or a Socinian. Why then should you treat your lawful ministers differently, and judge *them* on different grounds? Hear them attentively, and regularly, for a whole year; and if, at the end of the year, you miss anything which appears to *you* to be a doctrine of Scripture, distrust yourself. It is most likely that there is no such doctrine in Scripture at all; but, if there be, still it may not be necessary to salvation, and therefore not necessary to be made the subject of a particular discourse, or to be insisted upon in any way. What Christ himself constantly preached as the most essential of all things; what Paul preached from house to house, as the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity; what the first converts hailed as a most wonderful grace bestowed upon the Gentiles, was the doctrine of repentance unto life. If, therefore, any clergyman now-a-days were to affirm, that repentance towards God were not necessary to accompany faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, or even to omit the doctrine, I would give you my full permission to abandon his teaching. Your conscience might well revolt, and urge you to seek for sounder and more faithful expounders of Scripture. But even then it might not follow, that you should absolutely leave the church. Still you might be wrong in running after unauthorised persons here and there—always wavering, and never coming to any fixed principle. There may be more than one church in a parish; and, at any

rate, it is not probable that our vigilant bishops will long suffer a minister of wicked life and unsound doctrine to endanger the safety of the flock, which he has been charged to feed with wholesome nourishment, and to direct by a shining example. After all, then, there *may* be but one cause which will justify you in separating from the church of your country: and that is, a conscientious disagreement with us in doctrine generally; not a doubt whether we are right or not, but a decided conviction of the mind, upon the deepest and most deliberate investigation, that we are in the wrong; not a mere dislike of a single clergyman, of surplices, of the cross in baptism, of kneeling at the altar, or of any other non-essentials; but a real honest fear that you cannot be saved with us. These are my opinions, Mr. King. You have heard the same things, or nearly so, from me before; now, I trust, they will be more effectual, when they come to you as my parting advice and admonition."

Upon this, having paused for a while, and observing that Mr. King was not prepared to say anything, I rose from my chair, and presented my hand to him. As he left the room, however, not unmoved, he thanked me with apparent sincerity for the trouble which I had taken on his account and promised to weigh all my arguments with the utmost care and impartiality. "Remember," I

said, “if you cannot overturn them, you ought to yield to them. You are not bound to yield to all the arguments of all persons which you cannot overturn ; but you *are* bound, in such circumstances, to yield to the arguments of your lawful minister on the subject of religion: *that* is his peculiar province, and the people must take the law from his mouth ; or, if they refuse, they must be able to prove, before God, that it is not the law, but his own inventions, which he endeavours to palm upon them.” With this additional solemn warning I dismissed him, now still more moved, and glad, I believe, to escape.

But I did not rest here. The same day I called upon his sister, and had a long conversation with her upon the same topics, to enable her to co-operate with me when they came to their new abode ; and I imparted to her confidentially, what I happened to know very well of the principles of the curate of the parish to which they were going, although at a great distance from me. In fact, he himself being left in charge by a non-resident rector was one, in the bosom of the church, who was not satisfied with the old principles of the church, as they were settled at the Reformation, but caught at the *new lights*, and preached a more evangelical doctrine, as I am sure he thought, (for I believe he was a truly conscientious man,) than the rest of his brethren, who called themselves the

orthodox clergy. To this information Miss King replied, very judiciously, that such preaching might possibly be well calculated to bring her brother to the parish church of their intended place of residence, but what were she and the young people to do? "Why," I said, "you will not go to the dissenters, of course; for *that* would verify the old proverb, 'out of the frying-pan into the fire.'" "No," she answered, "we shall not do *that* at any rate; but it will be a perplexing situation. Would you advise us, Sir, to continue at the parish church, to our own great discomfort and hazard, merely on my brother's account, and to wear the appearance of mutual agreement in our religious principles?"

This was a home-question to me, and brought all my former positions in debating with her brother to a new test. In truth, as she very well said, the situation is a perplexing one. In conversing with persons on the other side, I had generally assumed, with too much confidence, that, in returning to the church, they would be delivered from all diversities and fluctuations of opinion, and would always know precisely where they were. This is a beautiful theory not always exactly realized by facts. Our church, indeed, is guarded by her creeds, and her whole Liturgy, as well as by specific articles; but men interpret these, of course, as they do the Scriptures, after their own fashion,

and not according to the sentiments of the original compilers. In different periods, indeed, there have pretty generally prevailed different fashions of interpretation,—Calvinistic, and Arminian, and what not ; and it is a favourite hypothesis with some people now, that the articles were purposely constructed to be justly capable of different interpretations, and thereby to make it possible for men of various and even opposite sentiments to unite in the same verbal profession and outward worship. I answered Miss King in the following manner:—

“ I would advise you,” I said, “ most certainly, to continue at the parish church,—chiefly because it *is* the parish church ; and, secondly, because if there were any other church within your reach, it is not likely that your brother should accompany you there. This object of apparent agreement amongst you, in going all to the proper place, is not of paramount importance ; yet it is of great importance too, in the example and in other ways ; and I would therefore make some sacrifice to accomplish it. You have yourself rightly stated what the sacrifice will be ; namely, that you and the young people will be exposed to discomfort and danger. To express it very correctly, the discomfort will be yours, and the danger theirs ; for I persuade myself, that *you* are too firmly grounded to be shaken even by the strongest blast. But

then this very circumstance will add to your discomfort, and you will be the less patient when you hear a perversion of true doctrine.* Still, however, bear it, I beseech you ; the good will outweigh the evil ; but beware how you discuss with your brother afterwards any topic in the discourse which may have offended you. This would disunite you worse than before. Turn all your attention to the guarding the young people from danger : thus, for instance, if your minister should dwell very much upon the doctrine of free salvation by grace, which he is sure to do, and, in consequence, should seem to set aside all conditions, and to disannul the obligation to good works altogether,—or at least to disparage them, and to put them in a low and degraded rank,—whatever you may think and feel, do not say in the presence of the young people, that he is ignorant, or heterodox, or foolish ; but show them dispassionately, by texts of Scripture, how infinitely important good works must be to us all nevertheless ; it being the most certain of all certainties, that our judgment will be according to our works, and our reward in proportion to our virtues. Explain to them, that in one view salvation may be said to be unconditional, as the preacher may have stated it, and conditional in another, or rather conditional in every other. The first notion of salvation in the divine mind must have been spontaneous bounty and mercy, free in

the fullest sense; but from the moment that infinite wisdom contemplates the means of accomplishing the purpose of free bounty and mercy consistently with infinite justice, the necessity of a condition springs up at once. Unless justice be satisfied, mercy cannot pardon. The first condition, therefore, and an indispensable one, is that Christ should die to satisfy justice. But here again, on the part of Christ, his spontaneous bounty and mercy, like that of God the Father, are entirely unmerited by us. The work of the Holy Spirit must be considered in the same light of unmerited compassion for our infirmities and inclination to sin. Now comes, however, another view. To apply the benefits of Christ's death to ourselves, we must accept it and rely upon it; this is a positive condition. Thirdly, we must prepare to profit by it through repentance; and, fourthly, we must qualify ourselves by holiness, for the bliss and glory to which it leads in heaven. In this view salvation, beginning in exuberant mercy, depends upon a series of conditions throughout.—God requires, in order to the salvation of the Gospel, the sacrifice of his Son, the co-operation of his Spirit, the faith, repentance, and holiness of men. I might also have mentioned baptism as a condition; for baptized we *must* be to enter into the kingdom of God. If the term free, therefore, means unconditional in all respects, it is a mis-

take; if it means only that we had no claim or right to salvation, who ever asserted that we had? We had none, undoubtedly, till it was offered to us, before Christ died, and the Holy Ghost came to dwell with us for our sanctification. These are original conditions of salvation, independent of ourselves; and the very Calvinist himself, who ascribes the salvation of each individual to an eternal irrespective decree of God, must still allow the purchase of it by Christ; so that God does not save unconditionally even those whom he decrees to save irrespectively. But in my sense of the term 'free,' conditions are very consistent with it. I call a gift free when the receiver has no antecedent expectation of it—no pretence whatever to demand it; and I affirm that the gift brings more glory to the giver when it is conditional than when it is unconditional. Indeed I see no glory in giving at random, capriciously, irrespectively, or arbitrarily; but only in giving to such as are fitly prepared for the gift. And as God declares that he wishes all men to be saved, we are sure that his grace is given in sufficient abundance to prepare all men fitly for salvation; that is, to enable them to add to their faith love and virtue of every species; in other words, to perform every good work. I give you a sort of outline, Miss King, which you may fill up according to the necessity of the case. At any rate

follow the Apostle's advice, and maintain the doctrine of good works to your nephews and nieces, not merely as an evidence of their faith, or as the fruits of it, (for God will know their faith with or without any evidence, or any fruits,) but that they may lay up for themselves a real and rich treasure in heaven ; that they may have something substantial to follow them when they die ; and that they may hear the Judge say to them individually, ' Well done, thou good and faithful servant ! Thou hast been faithful in a little, I will make thee ruler over much ! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

Now, then, after taking so much pains, what result will my readers adventure to foretell ? The whole family of the Kings removed, bag and baggage, according to their arrangements ; but in about a fortnight afterwards, to my great astonishment, did I see the identical Mr. King standing in one of my streets, opposite to the door of his ancient dwelling. " Do my eyes deceive me," I exclaimed, " or are you really come back in your own proper person ?" " It is I myself," he replied with a smile ; " I could not wind up my affairs *here* without returning for a few days." " Well," I said, for my curiosity was all awake, " and how stand your religious affairs *there* ?" " I have heard all the preachers in the town and in the neighbourhood," he answered, with perfect complacency, or rather exulting in his extraordinary

diligence ; for in truth it required no light exertion to have done it, where there were so many discordant sects ; and indeed I should imagine that some of them must have held meetings on purpose to give this illustrious stranger an early specimen of the doctrines and talents of their ministers. I was chagrined, I must confess ; nor did I attempt to conceal it. So passing on without delay, I only said, dryly, “ *You have, Mr. King? Indeed? Really? Good morning to you, Sir.* ” Nor did I ask or wait for any explanation.

But we had not yet finished. Early the next morning he was announced, and admitted ; and by his whole air and manner I should conjecture that he came with the intention of speaking out boldly, and of inflicting upon me a severe chastisement. Failing, however, as usual, in his first essay, his ardour was damped, and he fought with the same consciousness of inferiority, and probably with the same obstinate resolution to adhere to the conduct which he was incapable of defending.

When he was seated, I inquired first about various circumstances relating to the town, in which he had set up his staff, and then about the officiating minister of his parish. “ *Aye, Sir,* ” he exclaimed, “ *there you may see a fine example indeed! Never did anybody so properly encourage peace and harmony as he does. Why, Sir, he gives the right hand of fellowship to all,* ”

just as much as I would do: every day almost he may be seen walking arm in arm with one or another of the ministers of the several chapels." "Indeed!" I said, but not with surprise; for it was no novelty to me to hear of this species of *liberality* amongst the regular clergy, although it is surprising enough that they themselves should so far forget their stations and duties. This is not one of the least evils which Bible Societies and Missionary Societies have entailed upon our order. "And you admire him for this, it seems," I continued. "I do," he replied decisively; "he deserves it." "Then you would not have admired St. Paul," I said. At this he began to muse; so I went on. "You know, I presume, that St. Paul's conduct was totally different." Now, no doubt, there flashed upon his memory some of the strong expressions and terrible wishes, which St. Paul uttered against his adversaries, and all who troubled the church by the introduction of doctrines differing from his own. He was evidently staggered; but at length collecting himself, he said, "St. Paul was in the Spirit, Sir, and knew the truth. Our minister claims no such infallibility." "But are you aware," I asked, "that when he was ordained to his ministry, he embraced the doctrines of the church of England as true, and pledged himself to maintain the truth of them against all others; and, in short, to do his utmost

to expel all others from amongst the flock entrusted to his charge?" "I have never read the ordination service, Sir," he answered, not a little disturbed. "But your curate has," I said coolly, "although he appears to have forgotten it. However, you shall see what it is yourself this moment, that when you return you may be able to remind him of it."

Mr. King did not seem to know how to take this, and was exceedingly confused. Meanwhile, I reached a prayer-book from my shelf, which contained the ordination service, and pointed out to him the following passages. In the house and more immediate presence of God himself, the bishop addresses the persons about to be ordained, most solemnly and most awfully, thus: "Consider with yourselves," he saith, "the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the spouse and body of Christ, and see that you never cease your labour, your care, and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are committed to your charge, unto that *agreement* in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." Afterwards, to bind them the more firmly by their own asseveration in the audience of the people, he questions them

thus: “ Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God’s word, and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given ? ” To which each candidate answers, “ I will, the Lord being my helper.”

Next I showed him the references in the margin to St. Paul’s striking charges to Timothy and Titus, and to the elders of the church of Ephesus; in one of which, all who, after their own lusts, heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, are so terribly condemned. Then I read an extract from a note of Dean Comber’s at the bottom of the page, in which he truly says, that this declaration of the candidates is as sacred as an oath; that if they do not intend to keep it, they lie not to men, but to God; and that if they be negligent to keep it, it is equal to perjury.

Mr. King was now astounded and speechless, nor did he recover himself during the pause which ensued, whilst I replaced my Bible and prayer-book on the shelf. So I resumed thus: “ When living here, Mr. King, you were compelled, I think, to resort to a neighbouring parish for something agreeable to your taste in religion, on account of the wonderful agreement and unanimity amongst the rest of us to abide by the faith of the

church. But where you are now settled, I imagine, there is so little of agreement and unanimity, and so much of variety and diversity, that the most perverse lust or appetite may find enough in some corner or other to gratify it. Now, I ask you seriously, Mr. King, whether this is a state of things to be desired? I ask you seriously, whether, on the very contrary, it is not directly and totally at variance with all the notions of Christ's church inculcated upon us in Scripture; and whether it does not, to the disgrace of Protestants, furnish a strong handle to the Papists, whose religion you abhor so much, for casting in our teeth the mischiefs which have ensued since the barriers of popedom were broken down? But I have another thing to ask you seriously also,—whether you do not now see, as if it were written with a sunbeam, how much the conduct of your new minister, and of others like himself, tends to produce these fatal consequences?—how much, instead of banishing strange opinions and erroneous doctrines, he actually encourages them in direct violation of his vow?—how much, in short, by appearing to countenance the ministers and professors of all opinions and doctrines alike, he builds up a Babel of heterodoxy, instead of a united and orthodox, a sound, pure, and apostolical church? Answer me this, Mr. King."

Some men derive courage from despair. This

seemed to be the case with Mr. King at the present moment. I had risen, and was pacing about the room in the warmth of excitement, which my earnestness had created. There was no probability, from his appearance, that he would utter a word, although challenged to speak to a particular point; but suddenly, when my back was turned, he burst out, "You are too sharp, Sir; the minister of Christ should be gentle with all men. If they hold the main fundamentals, why should he despise or reproach them for petty differences?" "Mr. King," I said solemnly, advancing with haste to his chair, and laying one hand on the table before him, "you are condemned out of your own mouth; you leave the church for petty differences; this is positive schism."

Once more he was thrown on his back. I sat down, and proceeded more calmly thus: "Believe me, Mr. King, whoever separates from his church, for petty differences, is a schismatic; and the regular minister should be very careful to have no communication with him, at least not more than is absolutely necessary, except for the purpose of bringing him back to the fold from which he has strayed. If your minister acts as you tell me, I wonder not at all that the place is overrun with sectaries of every creed and denomination. If he knows so little of his own church, or values it so little, though bound to it by the most solemn

engagements, subscriptions, and oaths, as to put himself upon a par with unauthorized ministers, whose ministry therefore he ought not to allow, and whose doctrines, compared with the standard which he has adopted, he must judge erroneous, will not his people do the same? Will they not go to worship where it happens to be most convenient to them, and not even suspect that they are doing anything amiss or dangerous, when their proper minister, so far from warning and premonishing them, leads them into the fatal snare himself? But do you really mean to insinuate that the differences are only petty matters? I have made a strong, but a true observation upon this already, if they are, or if you think them to be so. However, let me ask, whether there are no Socinians or Unitarians in this famous town to enjoy the fraternizing liberality of your curate?" "I believe there may be," he replied, no little abashed; "but I do not say that I have seen him walking arm-in-arm with *them*." "What!" I said, "not if they were going to the same Bible Society or missionary meeting together?" His countenance fell still more, and he made me no answer. "Well," I said, "there are Methodists, no doubt, Wesleyans and Whitfieldians both, I warrant you;—how does he treat them? Does he walk arm-in-arm with their preachers, to show the people that he does not object to their doctrine of

sudden, instantaneous, and irresistible conversion, and of the impossibility of being saved without it?"

Here Mr. King interposed hastily, thinking, no doubt, that he had now a great advantage over me, and exclaimed, energetically, "Pray Sir, for goodness sake, did not our Lord say, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God?' Conversion, therefore, you see, Sir, is necessary for us all; and as the expression is, except ye *be converted*, it is evident that we have no hand in our conversion ourselves,—that we are quite passive in it,—and that the time and the manner of it depend upon the good pleasure of God alone. This is the truth, Sir, you cannot contradict; and a comfortable doctrine it is, that God will do this for us with his irresistible power, when it pleases him, however unable and however unwilling we may be to attempt it for ourselves."

"Whether I can contradict your interpretation or not, Mr. King," I said, coolly, "you shall see presently. Indeed I will tell you at once, that, as I have found so often, it is the same now—you misunderstand the passage altogether. Upon my word, Sir, it is lamentable to reflect, what wild work the unlearned make of Scripture, and how they wrest, not only hard things, but easy things also, to their own mischief. But I wish to observe, first, that if the passage implied, as you

suppose, that whoever is converted will be passive in his conversion, still it neither says nor insinuates that the conversion will be sudden, instantaneous, or irresistible ; or that conversion is necessary for us all. With respect to the conversion being irresistible, the insinuation goes rather the other way : namely, that we *may* resist it, and that we must be careful not to do so, on account of the bad consequences which may follow, and which are no less than exclusion from the kingdom of God. With respect to its being necessary for all men, the object of it is, that they should become as little children. Now therefore they, who are as little children already, cannot want it ; and, I presume, you will not deny that there are many such ; many, that is, who are humble, unprejudiced, and docile ; not trusting to their own knowledge arrogantly or conceitedly, but willing to seek and to receive information from those who are prepared and appointed to give it ; and for this reason paying the greater reverence to the divine institution of an apostolical ministry.”

During these observations, Mr. King was absolutely sitting upon thorns. Everything which I said touched him in the tenderest points. But he attempted no defence, whatever, of his position ; he suffered me to have my own way entirely ; in short, he was quite passive, yet no *convert*, I am sure. My readers, I dare say, would be more

pleased, and think the story better, if he came over ultimately to my opinions ; but they are mistaken ; the truth, that he did not, is more in character with the man, and with the whole species. I proceeded thus,—

“I wish to make an observation also with respect to your doctrine being comfortable, Mr. King. The comfortable doctrine is, that we may work out our own salvation, because God works in us both to will and to do. If we did not know that God worked in us, it would be in vain for us to try to work for ourselves ; but being assured of *that*, we are encouraged to try what we can do. Yet, after all, it is to be done with fear and trembling. God gives sufficient power, but we may not receive it with sufficient willingness, or apply it with sufficient steadiness and exertion. Our feeling, therefore, must always be that of fear and trembling. It is not to be the feeling of some short period, and then to be at an end for ever ; but it must accompany us through life. We want God’s power always, and therefore we ourselves must work always, and always with fear and trembling. Under this anxiety, however, it is an unspeakable comfort, that whenever we are conscious to ourselves that we are working, we are confident, that God is working with us, both by his preventing and assisting grace ; and consequently we may well hope that such working will

be effectual to our salvation. But in *your* way of representing the matter, Mr. King, there is vastly little comfort indeed; it must lead to a total inactivity, or to an absolute despair. If we are thoroughly convinced, that we cannot help the matter at all, and that the state of our own minds has nothing whatever to do with it; and that the thing may happen when we are least thinking of it, and most disinclined to it, suddenly, instantaneously and irresistibly; what have we to do but to acquiesce as contentedly as we can in the very state in which we now are,—sinners, impenitent and incorrigible sinners? If we cannot remain contentedly in such a state, there being so many tremendous denunciations against us; and if, therefore, we wait, and wait, and wait, expecting, but taking no steps, and finding nothing new in our condition, the consequence must be flat despair, Mr. King; there is no ray even of comfort to cheer us."

Still my opponent said nothing. Whether he made any secret defence of his doctrine in his own breast, I cannot tell; I suspect, that, during the last fortnight, he had gone deeper into Calvinism. But Calvinism does not help us out of the difficulty; it only brings us into it. I went on again:—

“ Now, Mr. King, I come to the interpretation of the expression itself. First, I will look into a concordance, to see where your text is; then I will refer to the original Greek to discover the

actual Greek word; next I will search for this word in the appropriate dictionary, and find in what other places it has been used; so that, finally, by comparison of places in our English translation, we shall arrive at the true sense in your text.” All this having been done in about five minutes, it appeared that it was precisely the same word, which is used over and over again, for ‘turning oneself;’ as for instance, twice in the 20th chapter of St. John’s Gospel, the translators have said of Mary Magdalene, that she ‘turned herself’ to see and to speak to Jesus. This being ascertained beyond the power of controversy, I drew the conclusion; that the meaning of Mr. King’s text was, ‘except ye turn yourselves;’ and consequently, that a state of activity, but not of passiveness, was denoted by it. This was decisive enough; but such a victory did not satisfy me. So I said, “Mr. King, you have been misled with regard to this text, by the form of the translation. Perhaps, I shall surprise you still more, when I tell you, that, wherever anything is affirmed about conversion in other places, the word is always an active and not a passive one. You shall judge for yourself, but you must trust me to a certain extent; I will not deceive you, believe me.”

Upon this I opened my concordance again, and then examined, in his presence, in the English and in the original, every passage to which the concord-

ance referred us. Universally, I think, the translation was passive, but the original active; and what seemed to strike him most was, the prophesy which is so often cited in the Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles;—as for instance at the very end of the Acts, the real meaning is, that they should ‘turn back,’ or, ‘convert themselves.’ He recollects what Christ said to Peter, ‘when thou art converted;’ I turned to the Greek; there was no comfort for him; the word was an active participle. Then he bethought himself of, ‘repent and be converted;’ it was an active verb. Thus was he beaten at all points. But what of that? He was himself, I have no doubt, inconvertible.

I hasten to conclude, being weary of my story. “Mr. King,” I said, “I have taken some pains with you, it must needs be allowed.—I hope God will bless my trouble.—I must now go out on my duties abroad.” So saying, I rose, presented my hand to him, and rang the bell. As he departed, he wished me health and prosperity with every appearance of cordiality; but not a word to the great purpose of our discussion. Whatever he thought, it was locked up in the secresy of his own heart; and never since have I either seen him, or heard of him.

THE END.

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